

The
Newcastle Packets

and the
Hunter Valley

by

J. H. M. ABBOTT



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The Newcastle Packets
and the
Hunter Valley

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“Sophia Jane”—1831

The Newcastle Packets and the Hunter Valley

by

J. H. M. ABBOTT

Author of

"Tommy Cornstalk," "An Outlander in England," "Letters from
Queer Street," "The South Seas," "Castle Vane," "The Governor's
Man," "William Dampier," etc.

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FOREWORD

THE only claim the author can make on behalf of the book that follows these preliminary remarks is that he has done his best to present to other Australians—and to people who don't quite so much count—something of the story of a countryside he loves and believes in, and of that most important factor in its development, the steam-driven shipping that has served it so well for more than a century under the ownership of several corporations that are now embodied in the Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited. Looking over the MS. that lies piled up on his desk, he is conscious of one or two omissions that he can hardly justify—he has, for instance, only referred to the very earliest days of coal-mining in the Newcastle district. He can only plead that there hasn't been room for everything, and hopes that what he has written about may have some interest for the general reader.

He would like to make particular acknowledgment to the Mitchell Library in Sydney for most of his sources of information, and especially to the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, in which valuable publication have appeared from time to time many papers having to do with the story of the Hunter Valley. Of all these, perhaps the most useful and reliable have been contributed to the Journal by the late Mr. J. F. Campbell, whose knowledge of the story of the Valley was almost encyclopædic. He would like

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also, to thank Mr. A. F. Smith, of "The Scone Advocate," for the use of the series of articles, entitled "Peeps at the Past," published in that newspaper some years ago. And to the management of the Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited, he is indebted for much appreciated assistance in the making of this book.

In his story of the Hunter Valley the author has hardly anywhere come further into modern times than the middle of the Nineteenth Century, and can only excuse himself for this by expressing a belief that less familiar news of an earlier day is of more interest than a description of what happened last week.

Sydney, 1942.

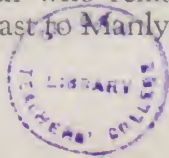
J.H.M.A.

Chapter I

THE OLD COAL RIVER

ALTHOUGH Lieutenant John Shortland, R.N., is always credited with the discovery of the Hunter River, at the beginning of September in the year 1797, nearly a decade after the establishment of British settlement in New South Wales, the fact of his going there at all is really due to the enterprise of a party of convicts who are now only nameless and forgotten men, with no place at all in Australia's story.

On September the 5th in the year mentioned the Government vessel "Cumberland," voyaging from Sydney to the Upper Hawkesbury with a cargo of stores, was boarded at the mouth of the river by a number of convicts from a small boat. They took possession of the little craft, being made heartily welcome on board by some of her company. The combined party informed the coxswain and crew of the "Cumberland" that they intended to use her in making their escape from New South Wales and penal servitude, threatening their lives if they should presume to offer any resistance. So the petty officer in command made the best of a bad job and landed in Pittwater with those of his men who remained faithful. They travelled down the coast to Manly Cove, and eventually



reached Sydney, where the coxswain reported to the authorities the piracy of the vessel lately under his charge.

It is a pretty picture, all purple coastline, blue sky over rugged ranges inland, and dancing waves breaking into foam round the rocky bases of Lion Island and the headland of Barrenjoey, with the little Hawkesbury packet-boat—one of the first ships of the Australian mercantile marine—dancing and curtseying on a westerly course across Broken Bay towards the mouth of the river. And then the small boat from the shore, probably making signals of distress, with the "Cumberland" hauling up into the wind to await its arrival. It must have been a disillusioned and disgusted coxswain who realised presently what the matter really was, but, with some of his men siding with the runaways, nothing was left for him but to do what he did. So he went ashore on the long strip of sand inside the harbour now known as Palm Beach, with his three men, to undertake the hazardous rough tramp along the coastline to Port Jackson.

Governor Hunter's version of the incident is given in a dispatch to the Duke of Portland, the Colonial Secretary, dated January 10, 1798.

"I have now to inform your Grace," he says, "that on the fifth day of September last, as our largest and best boat, belonging to the Government, was on her way to the Hawkesbury River, carrying thither a few stores, and to bring from there some articles wanted here, a service on which she was constantly employed, she was taken possession of by part of the crew, assisted by a few men in another boat, who threatened the life of the coxswain and all who dared to oppose

them. They put him and the others on shore at Broken Bay, and went off with the boat we know not whither. And as another party of these villains went off some time after in another boat, and the very men who were landed from the first, as unwilling to go, were a part of the second gang, I am of opinion that it had been a long concerted plan. Not having any fit vessel to pursue upon such occasion, I dispatched two row-boats, well armed; the one went about sixty miles northward along the coast, and the other forty miles southward, but without success, a gale blowing soon after the escape of the second boat, which obliged the officer in pursuit to land upon the coast. There is every reason to believe that the last party has perished, as the vessel was very feeble. Most of the people were of the last Irish convicts."

The boat sent to the northward was in charge of Lieutenant John Shortland, R.N., and as several of his family are connected with the story of early Australia, some biographical details relating to the discoverer of the Hunter may not be out of place. He was a son of the Lieutenant John Shortland who came out with Phillip as Naval Agent in the First Fleet. Born in 1769, he joined the navy in 1781, becoming a lieutenant in 1792, commander in 1800, and post-captain in 1805.

Shortland served as master's-mate in H.M.S. "Sirius" on the voyage to Botany Bay in 1787. When Captain Hunter returned home in 1792 he took the young officer with him, and when he came out as Governor in 1795 made him first lieutenant of H.M.S. "Reliance," the ship in which he sailed to New South Wales. He served in this vessel until her return to England in 1800, when he was appointed to H.M.S. "Pandora"

as agent for Abercrombie's troops, then on their way to Egypt.

A quaint exploit of Shortland's in Egypt is worth mentioning as typical of his cheery temperament. While lying off Alexandria in 1803 he landed a party, with whose assistance he flew a kite over Pompey's Pillar, hauled over it a rope and then a rope ladder, and climbed 160 feet to the top to drink the King's health. A few days later he repeated the performance, ate a beefsteak there, and fixed a weather vane on top of the obelisk.

His last adventure in the navy, however, was more heroic, and endowed him with lasting fame in the great service to which he had devoted his life. This was his fight in H.M.S. "Junon" with four French frigates. The "Junon" was originally a 40-gun frigate in the French navy, and had been captured in Nova Scotian waters in February, 1809. When he was given command of her, Shortland spent £1500 of his own money in fitting her out. On December 13, 1809, he sighted four ships, which at first he took for Spaniards, but presently realised to be French. He found himself forced to give battle with a ship's company of 200 against a squadron mounting altogether 120 guns and manned by 1400 seamen. The engagement lasted an hour and a quarter, when half his men were killed and he himself severely wounded—the "Junon" was so damaged that she had to be burnt next day. His French captors carried her commander to Guadaloupe, where he died in the military hospital on January 21, 1810.

Shortland left Sydney in chase of the pirated "Cumberland" in a whaleboat, equipped with provisions for a fortnight, and searched Port Stephens for

the runaways, finding no traces of them. Then he turned back to Sydney, and David Collins, the ablest historian of Australia's earliest years, gives an account of his discovery of the Hunter River.

"Mr. Shortland's pursuit, however, had not been without advantage, for on his return he entered a river which he named Hunter's River, about ten leagues to the southward of Port Stephens, into which Lieutenant Shortland carried three fathoms of water, in the shoalest part of the entrance, finding deep water and good anchorage when within. The entrance of this river is but shallow, and covered by a high rocky island lying right off it, so as to leave a good passage round the north end of the island, between that and the shore. A reef connects the south part of the island with the south shore of the entrance to the river. In this harbour are found a considerable quantity of very good coal, and lying so near the waterside as to be conveniently shipped, which gives it in this particular a manifest advantage over that discovered at the southward. Some specimens of the coal were brought up in the boat."

Hunter remained in New South Wales as Governor until the last quarter of the year 1800, but does not seem to have himself visited the scene of Shortland's discovery, although, of course, he was officially associated with the first export of coal from the river in 1799.

This pioneer cargo was shipped to Bengal, and was the first of its kind to leave Australia. There is no record of either the shipper, the ship, or her captain, but a fair likelihood exists that she may have been the "Hunter," then owned by Campbell, Clarke & Co., of

Calcutta, which had arrived in Port Jackson in the middle of the previous year. So far as it has been possible to ascertain, the "Hunter" was the only ship which sailed for Bengal from Port Jackson in August, 1799, so it seems rather more than likely that she really was the first collier to leave Australian waters.

Several Sydney merchants—Underwood, Lord and Palmer—investigated the "Coal River," as it was generally referred to, and sent small vessels there not long after Shortland's discovery of it, but it was not until the beginning of 1800 that a regular shipping trade was established, mainly in red cedar. This valuable timber flourished in various places along the lower river—for years it was known as the "Cedar Arm"—assigned convicts being employed in cutting the cedar and rafting it down to the river mouth.

Curiously enough, the first settlement of any length of time on the site of Newcastle was that of a party of convicts, who repeated the "Cumberland" exploit by seizing the "Norfolk," a vessel of 25 tons, built at Norfolk Island, in Broken Bay in November, 1800.

The little vessel, employed in the government service, was on its way from the Hawkesbury to Sydney with a cargo of 500 bushels of wheat, when she was captured by 15 convicts at the mouth of the river. They intended to make their escape to the Dutch East Indies. Turning into Port Hunter in bad weather, the "Norfolk" was wrecked at a spot on the north shore since known as Pirate Point. Nine of them seized another craft belonging to some of the Sydney merchants, and set out in continuance of their voyage to the Dutch colonies, while six remained at the river mouth. The nine absconders were pursued by an armed

cutter from Port Jackson, captured, and taken back to Sydney, where two of them were hanged, the remainder being sent to Norfolk Island. The six who stayed behind at the Coal River crossed over to the south shore, where they lived among the natives, though three of the party attempted to reach Sydney overland, with the intention of surrendering to the authorities. It is probable that those who remained on the river ended their days with the blacks, retiring inland when settlement came.

When Captain Philip Gidley King assumed the government of New South Wales in 1800, he had very definite ideas as to the importance of fostering a coal industry, but hoped to find workable seams closer to Sydney than at the Hunter River. For some time he had an expert miner named Platt investigating the country near the mouth of George's River at the back of Botany Bay, and afterwards the strata at Coal Cliff in Illawarra. As no very satisfactory results were the outcome of Platt's prospecting activities, King decided on a thorough test of the possibilities of the Hunter.

In April, 1801, he was contemplating the dispatch of a research expedition to the Hunter for the purpose of finding out what the value of the district might be for coal, timber, and other commodities, but in the meantime a privately owned vessel, the brig "Anna Josepha," belonging to Simeon Lord and commanded by Hugh Meehan, had been the first vessel of any size to moor in the river. She anchored off the north shore inside Pirate Point, close to the saw-pit dug some time before by Meehan. This anchorage was abandoned for one on the southern side, where Lord's men formed a camp and began to collect coal from the beach as

well as from the face of the cliff. They carried it in bags and baskets to the beach on the south shore, where it was loaded into the brig. Some of the party went up the river for cedar and other timber, which was rafted down to the saw-pits at the entrance to be cut into lengths that would fit the ship's hold. On May 29 the "Anna Josepha" sailed for Sydney, anchoring in Port Jackson the same evening.

On June 9, 1801, Governor King handed the following letter to Lieutenant Grant, R.N., commanding H.M.S. "Lady Nelson," and since the document is of unique historic interest, as relating not only to the survey of the port and river, but also to the first official effort to exploit the Hunter River's commercial possibilities, it may be quoted *in extenso*.

"As winter is now advancing," it reads, "which renders it unsafe for the 'Lady Nelson' being sent to renew the survey of Bass' Strait and the south-west coast of this country until the spring, and as the surveying of Hunter's River, lying between this place and Port Stephens, is of the utmost consequence to be ascertained, you are hereby required and directed to receive Lieutenant-Colonel Paterson and the persons on board, as per margin, bearing them on a supernumerary list for provisions, and proceed without loss of time to Hunter's River, for which place you are provided with a pilot. When arrived there, you will give every assistance to Ensign Barrallier in making as complete a survey as possible of the entrance and inside of that river, its shoals, depth of water, and every other particular, as pointed out by the second paragraph of your former orders. You will take under your command the 'Francis,' colonial schooner, and cause her to be laden

with the best coals that can be procured; and should that vessel be laden before the survey is completed, you will dispatch her to this place without loss of time."

The "Lady Nelson" was one of the most notable vessels in the story of early Australia, and was the first craft in which a centre-board, or retractable keel, was used in navigation. She was built by Captain (afterwards Admiral) Schanck in 1790 specifically for exploring work on the coasts of Australia, and navigated to this country by Lieutenant James Grant, R.N. She was of shallow draught, and had three keels which could be hauled up into water-tight casings when sailing in shoal waters. Of all the craft that took part in the exploration of the coasts of the southern continent, she was probably the most famous, and when she was lost in 1825 in northern waters, she had rendered the greatest service to Australian geographical research. She was only of 60 tons burthen, and almost flat-bottomed, drawing but six feet of water, and depending for stability at sea on her movable keels. She had a freeboard of 2 feet 9 inches.

When you came in from the sea to the mouth of the Hunter River at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and old King George III, intermittently insane, presided over an empire that had not long before—partly by his and his advisers' folly—lost the priceless possession of the American colonies, and had just started another phase of empire-building in this vast, unknown continent of the south, the scene was very different from that on which you may look to-day. The broad sheet of water stretching inland from the Coal Island—almost half as tall again as it is now—lay calm and placid between dark belts of mangroves, and there

was nothing at all beyond those low-lying shores but an uncivilisation as old as the world. Quiet and serene and mysterious, running into the ocean out of wide-flung territories that no European knew anything about, the old Coal River had a past utterly unknown, but a future that is in the making as we see it now. No one knew, when the "Lady Nelson" anchored in the estuary so long ago, what was to happen by this silent river mouth. The settlement at Port Jackson was still primitive and precarious in its chances of survival, and no one there as yet was able to regard New South Wales as an established province of the British Empire. But here, this evening, that problematical outpost was already establishing an outpost of an outpost. Though no one in the "Lady Nelson" realised it then, this was only another instance of the British genius for colonisation—the genius that admits no chance of failure and has always succeeded, whatever the odds against it.

Chapter II

NEWCASTLE IN 1830

BETWEEN Lieutenant Shortland's discovery of the Hunter River and the coming of steam navigation a whole generation elapsed, and the settlement at Port Hunter developed out of a convict camp into the beginnings of a respectable town of considerable importance. But before we take a glance at Newcastle in 1830 it is necessary to consider a little the first exploration of the lower river and its tributaries, as alluded to in the previous chapter. This was the expedition in the "Lady Nelson," led by Lieut.-Colonel Paterson, during the course of which Ensign Barrallier made the first map of the district.

The brig sailed from Port Jackson early on the morning of June 10, 1801, under the command of Lieutenant James Grant, R.N. The expedition he had been commissioned by the Governor to carry to the Hunter consisted of Lieut.-Colonel Paterson, Surgeon John Harris, Ensign Barrallier (Engineer and Surveyor), J. W. Frewin (Artist), J. H. Platt (the expert miner), James (the pilot), five sawyers, six soldiers, the crew, and the native Boongarie, or Bungaree—about 70 persons, all told. The mates of the "Lady Nelson" were named Murray and Bower,

and the colonial schooner "Francis" was under the charge of a man named Aitkin.

They spent a little time at the entrance to Lake Macquarie (Reid's Mistake), arriving off the mouth of the Hunter early on the morning of Sunday, June 14. During the forenoon Lieutenant Grant and Dr. Harris put off in a boat to examine the entrance to the river, and on their return to the brig Colonel Paterson named the rock in the opening, now known as Nobbys, the "Coal Island." The two vessels were brought abreast of the island and anchored for the night. Next morning at daybreak they were towed by their boats into the river, and moored off the north shore in three fathoms of water.

On the 16th, Paterson and Grant took Platt, the miner, ashore to examine the coal measures in the cliff and on the beach. They found a seam 22 inches thick high up in the cliff face, and at the foot of the hill and on the reef other strata of varying dimensions. On the following day Platt landed a gang of men to dig out the coal and load it into the schooner, which had collected a full cargo of 24 tons by the 26th, when she sailed to Sydney, arriving there on the following day.

While the "Francis" was being loaded with the first cargo of coal to leave Newcastle, Paterson, Grant, Harris and Barrallier set off up the river in boats. Eventually they got as far as the present position of Singleton, and also explored for a short distance the tributary streams, Williams and Paterson. Barrallier made the curious mistake in his chart of marking the Williams as the main stream—in view of the appearance of the two rivers at their junction, a very natural error.



JOHN ALLEN

“William the Fourth”



“Rose”

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Impressed by the reports concerning their expedition which he received from Grant, Paterson, Harris and Barrallier, Governor King decided to establish a small post at the mouth of the Hunter, and this little garrison found itself planted there at the end of June, 1801. Corporal Wixstead and five privates made up its *personnel*, and they had charge of a working party of convicts engaged in getting coal, under the direction of Platt, the mine-manager. Another gang was employed up the river in cutting cedar.

It was a queer little community, and was not a great success. Wixstead was a good fellow, and did his best, but was quite unsuited for the job. His military subordinates resented his appointment as a sort of minor governor, and eventually he found his work greatly hampered by their disloyalty. He treated the best of the convicts with consideration, but anonymous letters went to Governor King accusing the corporal of drinking liquor that should have been issued to the soldiers in his charge. So at the end of September, Surgeon Martin Mason was sent up to hold an inquiry into the soldiers' complaints. Wixstead was exonerated, but was censured for slackness in his administration of the outpost. Dr. Mason was put in charge of it, and it is not easy to see why the Governor selected him for the position, as his reputation in the colony was not very good, and he was more or less "in Coventry" with his brother magistrates. In this distant outpost he was a decided failure, and his brutal conduct to the prisoners even provoked a minor mutiny. Eventually he was relieved of his charge and recalled to Sydney, and not long afterwards King decided to abandon the settlement, feeling that it was too far away from the seat

of government for proper control. The soldiers and convicts were accordingly brought back to Sydney early in 1802.

It was not until March, 1804, that King decided again to establish an outpost at the mouth of the Hunter for the purpose of obtaining coal and cedar. He selected Lieutenant Charles Menzies as Commandant, and named the settlement "Newcastle, in the County of Northumberland." It is not possible here to follow closely the growth and development of the little community from the period of Menzies' command until the date which heads this chapter, but we may glance at it briefly.

Lieutenant C. A. F. N. Menzies was an officer of the Royal Marines, and had volunteered his services to Governor King when he heard that the Hunter was to be re-settled. In the official letter accepting them, the name "Newcastle," as applied to the settlement, appears for the first time, and in a dispatch to Lord Hobart dated April 16, 1804, King gives his reasons for the selection of this name.

"Although the harbour and river will still retain their original name," he writes, "yet I have considered it advisable, to avoid future mistakes, to give the settlement a name, and none appears so applicable as that of Newcastle. And as no bounds had ever been prescribed to this county (i.e., Cumberland) northwards, I considered it would be equally applicable to call the country in which new Newcastle is placed 'Northumberland,' that being the next county to Cumberland in England."

Menzies' establishment consisted of 1 sergeant, 9 privates, 1 marine, 2 superintendents of convicts and a

junior surgeon—the soldiery, of course, being members of the N.S.W. Corps and the marine the Commandant's personal servant. Prisoners were to be employed in procuring coal and cedar, and no one else was to be allowed to dig for coal or cut cedar without official sanction. The new colony sailed from Sydney in the "Lady Nelson," the "Resource" and the "James" on March 27, 1804, and arrived in the Hunter on the 30th of the month.

At first everything went very well with the revived settlement, but a murderous plot of mutiny was discovered in June, nipped in the bud, and the ringleaders severely punished. A massacre of the local authorities had been planned, but the scheme was fortunately given away by some of the conspirators before it came to a head. Menzies seized and double-ironed the two leaders, and sent them to Sydney to be dealt with. "Allow me to say," he wrote to King, "that two more determined villains never existed." They did not exist much longer.

For nearly 20 years Newcastle was a penal settlement and nothing else—a place of secondary punishment for convicts who offended again while serving their original sentences. The disciplinary system was harsh and merciless—no more terrible place of punishment ever existed during the convict era in Australia, than the subsidiary establishment for "incurables" at Limeburners' Bay, on the inner side of the Stockton Peninsula. The Commandants who succeeded Menzies were more or less humane men, and did what they could for their charges, but Major Morrisset, of H.M. 48th Regiment, left behind him a reputation for ferocious harshness that has not yet been forgotten.

John Bingle, in reminiscences published when he was a very old man, gives us a glimpse at the Coal River Settlement under Morrisset in 1821.

"Although upwards of 50 years have elapsed since," he writes, "there is not effaced from my memory the impression this made. I had never visited a convict settlement, nor seen the arbitrary powers carried to such an extent. Perhaps it was necessary for the safety of the settlement that such severe discipline and punishments should be adopted, but to a stranger's eye it seemed very un-English. Walking out with the Commandant to see the beauties of the harbour, the splendid ocean view, and, above all, the magnificent and unrivalled prospect from the church close, and to give me an idea of the awe in which he was held, I found no convict passed us walking; all drew up, head uncovered, long before we reached them, and every coal cart drew up and stopped."

Convict mining was very primitive. There were 27 men in the mining gang in 1820, and it was all task work—every miner having to cut $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons of coal each day. The coal was carried in barrows to the bottom of the shaft and hauled to the surface by a windlass. The work was very severe, the drives being only 4 feet 6 inches high, and bad health amongst the miners was the usual condition of things. Compared with this work, that of the cedar-cutters was a recreation and diversion.

In the earliest days of settlement there was plenty of cedar near the river mouth, but it was soon cut out, and by 1820 the timber gangs were working 70 miles up the river. Trees were selected by the overseers, and then cut down, lopped, and rolled to the river

bank, where the logs were made into rafts on which huts were erected to accommodate the prisoners. There were two boats to look after each raft, and when they came close to Newcastle, all the available small craft in the settlement were sent to meet them. It usually took about a week to navigate the raft down to the mouth of the river. The cedar-getting gangs were sometimes up the valley for four or five weeks, and each gang had a military escort of a corporal and three soldiers. The men built bark huts for themselves in the bush, and their daily work, like that of the miners, was tasked—30 men being supposed to cut 100 logs, from 12 to 16 feet long, in a month.

For the first half dozen years of its existence the population of Newcastle did not vary—there were 128 inhabitants in 1804 and 100 in 1810. The common fry among the prisoners lived in the gaol, but well-conducted men were allowed to erect huts, and it was regarded as a great privilege to possess a dwelling of this sort. Bingle says that the appearance of the huts was always neat and orderly—whenever instructed to do so by the Commandant, tenants had to whitewash both the outsides and the insides of their residences.

The population of the settlement began to grow after 1810—mainly owing to the increased demand in Sydney for timber and lime. Large numbers of prisoners were sent to the station, and a good deal of new building became necessary. In 1811 the population of the township was 124; in 1815, 272; in 1817, 553; and in 1821, 1169.

During the regime of Captain Wallis something of a building boom took place—the Commandant caused to be erected a church, hospital, stone gaol, accommoda-

tion for officers, barracks for the convicts, a guard-room, watch-house, boat-house, and a lumber-yard, or general enclosure for men working at trades. The breakwater joining Nobby's and the mainland was begun in 1812, though almost half a century was to elapse before it was completed.

The hospital stood where the present Newcastle Hospital is, and the gaol was on the site of the Tramway depot. The watch-house was situated about where the present police station is, and the lumber-yard site is now occupied by the Custom House.

During Governor Macquarie's reign, as might have been expected, a good deal of public work was carried out in the town. A parsonage was built, barracks for a company of soldiers, a military hospital, a couple of windmills, residences for the storekeeper, Chief Constable and Superintendent of Convicts. The original streets were repaired and new ones laid out. The Commandant's House in Watt Street was put into good order, but was burned down soon after Major Morrisset's time.

Towards the end of Macquarie's term of office he decided that it was time to abandon Newcastle as a penal station—partly because it was too close to Sydney, but also for the reason that he considered it desirable to make the Hunter Valley's rich territories available for free settlement. He would reduce the number of prisoners employed at Newcastle to 100, and the others would be sent to Port Macquarie. The year 1823 marks the end of the city's penal-settlement era, when no one was permitted to land at Newcastle, or go away, without official sanction.

In August, 1822, Mr. Surveyor Dangar began a

survey of the town, with a view towards laying it out in allotments for general settlement. Township allotments were to be held on leases for 21 years, and if in that time the tenant had erected a building worth £1000 he was to be given the freehold of the land.

The first inn—"The Newcastle Hotel"—was opened in 1823 for the entertainment of "Gentlemen, Settlers and Others," and in 1827, when the population only numbered about 1200, there were 27 public-houses.

In July, 1824, a passage-boat began to trade between Newcastle and Wallis Plains (West Maitland). No road existed between the two places—a track through the Hexham swamps being the only land route to the first inland settlement on the Hunter River. And it was about this time that the Newcastle Packets had their origin. In August, 1823, the cutter "Eclipse" began a regular run between Port Jackson and Port Hunter, but she was pirated by a gang of convicts in the following year, and the service was carried on by the "Lord Liverpool," under the command of Captain Livingstone.

Between the end of Macquarie's time and a century ago the population of Newcastle did not increase very much—it was 1169 in 1821 and 1377 in 1841. But its character had changed entirely. The settlement was beginning to take on the aspect of a free civilisation, though there was still a large convict gang engaged in the construction of the breakwater, which was guarded by a considerable garrison.

In 1830 Newcastle was still a village, with less than 40 houses in its streets. But in the following year—the year with which this book is most concerned—steam navigation was to begin an alteration in the con-

dition of things at the mouth of the Hunter River that was to mark the inauguration of a new era. The story of the Newcastle Packets, which we are coming to presently, is not the least important of many factors that have combined to make the present City of Newcastle one of the principal communities of the Australian Commonwealth.

Chapter III

RED CEDAR

BEFORE we turn to the beginnings of steam communication along the coast between Sydney and Newcastle by the "Sophia Jane" in 1831, we may glance briefly at the two industries which were the jointly principal reason for the foundation of a settlement at the mouth of the Hunter River in the first years of the nineteenth century, as handed down to us in contemporary records. They were, of course, coal-mining and cedar-getting.

In the early eighteen-twenties, a young immigrant landed in Sydney Cove to try his luck in this country, and about twenty-five years later—in 1847—he published anonymously in London a little book that was by way of being an autobiographical account of his life, adventures and fortune in New South Wales during the intervening years. It is the work of a keen observer, a logical moralist, and a very wholesome and rare personality that was not deficient in the saving grace of humour. Taken with Surgeon Peter Cunningham's "Two Years in New South Wales," these accounts of the young colony give as complete an impression of everyday life in Australia a century-and-a-quarter ago as it is possible to obtain from any source.

The author was Alexander Harris—he veils his

identity with the pseudonym of "An Emigrant Mechanic"—and under the title of "Settlers and Convicts" writes of colonial life in Australia from the point of view of the free pioneers who were beginning at that time to land here in fairly large numbers. It is a delightful yarn—honest, breezy and optimistic—and falls not far short of ranking as a classic in the contemporary historical literature of our earliest days. He published several other books afterwards under his own name, but "Settlers and Convicts" will always remain his most valuable contribution to such literature in the estimation of students of Australian history.

Harris began his acquirement of "colonial experience" as a cedar-getter—first of all in the Illawarra district of New South Wales—and the passages reprinted below from "Settlers and Convicts" have to do with some of it that came his way in the Hunter Valley. For a reason not very evident, he is careful throughout his writings to disguise real names and places, but there can be no doubt that the "River ——" of his narrative was the Williams. The cedar forests have long been cut out in and about the Hunter Valley, as elsewhere in New South Wales, but for many years they yielded a rich harvest of valuable timber to the colony. How completely they have disappeared may be recognised from the present writer's own experience. Though a native of Wallis Plains (Maitland), and with a fairly long lifetime's knowledge of the Hunter Valley between Newcastle and Murrurundi, the only red cedar he has ever seen growing is in Sydney's Botanic Gardens! Only in almost inaccessible parts of the ranges are any red cedars (*cedrelis tuna*) to be found flourishing now.

“At this time”—Harris is writing of the adventures of himself and a companion in the district of the Lower Hunter in the late eighteen-twenties—“the cedar-getting was going on at a great pace to the north of Sydney, on —— River, one of the tributaries of the Hunter. Thither at length we resolved to proceed, taking with us, by one of the boats that went as far up the stream as it was navigable, our own provisions; and so to set in on the best fall of timber we could find on Government ground near the river bank, and cut away until our stock of provisions was exhausted; then bring the plank we had got up to Sydney, and sell it on our own account. And this, after certain leave-takings, we accordingly did; taking with us, moreover, a free man, whom we knew to be a hard-working chap, as a labourer, to fall trees with the axe, build the pits, clear the roads through the bush, bring out the plank, give us help at heavy lifts, and afford us the needful assistance in all those other difficulties which render cedar-getting too heavy for only a pair of men. . . .

“The —— River, on the banks of which we now were, rises and for a long distance winds to and fro among the mountains of the county of Durham; at length it falls into the Hunter, not a great way from the mouth of that stream. It is now well settled, but at the time we were there, spoiling it of its cedar, only here and there amidst the lonely wilderness were to be found a settler’s farm or stockman’s hut. The blacks were occasionally, but not often, troublesome. . . . Tree after tree went crashing down before our labourer’s axe, and breaking a broad opening to the sky around its stump; and pile after pile of square red plank

arose in welcome transformation on the spot, as our saw did its duty; and road after road stretched straight away from the piles of cedar to the river's edge, which as yet was shallow, and full of shoals and falls. . . .

"Our nearest neighbour of the settler genus was a strange, eccentric old sea captain. Apparently when he first commenced settler he had plenty of money, with part of which he had bought a herd of cattle. Wherever he went his sword was his inseparable companion—he walked about flourishing it at the trees all day long. He had, however, more reason for guarding himself from his own people than from anyone else; for his overseer was all the time branding lots of his young cattle in his own name, whilst the old gentleman gave him credit for being one of the most honest, trustworthy fellows on the earth. . . . On the other side we had an old major of the army, who, I believe, had a family, and was very poor. We heard that when he first took possession of his land he was quite well off, but he had impoverished himself greatly, as gentlemen settlers so very often do, by expending their capital on everything but that which really wants doing."

Harris tells a story of his fellow-workers in the forest which gives us a picture of those early Australian lumber-jacks as they really were. He and his partner had lost most of the first fruits of their toil in a flood, which washed away nearly all their cut and dressed planks of cedar. They began all over again.

"One incident only of a much more unpleasant than unusual character marks this period. A lot of sawyers from various pits had met at the old sea captain's farm, where a large cask of brandy had arrived. After letting them drink very freely, he took it into his head not to

let them have any more. This at first they would not submit to; but the old gentleman, who, by the by, was not at all behind with them in their own way, showed such very strong symptoms of using his sword and pistols that they thought best to decamp. A council of war was then held, and someone suggesting that I and my mate had a lot of rum still left, down they came in a body to an amount of about twelve or fifteen. At first we did not much heed the shouting and shrieking, in every tone and dialect, from that of Cockneyism to that of the Irish province which is said to be a mile beyond his Satanic Majesty's residence; but it came nearer and nearer. At last it crossed the river and came up the road through the bush; and by the time we were at the fire in our shirts, the whole corps debouched before us. Some wore check shirts, some wore woollen; some were in red ones and some in blue, and some in none at all; some had straw hats, some Scotch caps, some old working skull-caps, some nothing but their own shock heads of hair; some had sticks in their hands, some the ration-bags they had been to get filled; some the axe they had been sharpening at the grindstone, and some three or four ribs of salted beef for tomorrow's dinner; some sang, some yelled, some said nothing, but the one unanimous demand was the remainder of our stock of rum. All my remonstrances were ineffectual. I was told at last that if I did not give it they would take it, and put me on the fire for a back-log.

"Of course, further parley was useless; I brought it out, and they set to it with all the pannikins they could muster. R——, whose habituation to such emergencies from his infancy rendered him much more a match

for them than I was, employed himself in getting hold of every vessel that he could, and pouring it out unobserved upon the ground; and as they were filling only pint and quart pots, this proceeding soon lowered their stock; and by sunrise it was all gone. They then gradually began to disperse; a couple, however, took possession of our bed and slept all day; and after having their supper with us at night, went home."

Most of these men would have been time-expired convicts, with a leavening of native-born young Australians like Harris's companion, and a few emigrants of his own class. Rough, hard-working, hard-living fellows they were, these pioneers of the Hunter Valley, toilsomely fighting the hardships and vicissitudes of an enterprise that demanded all they had of endurance and resource, of courage and manhood, and gave them nothing of comfort or the elements of luxury. In all weathers they battled through a strenuous existence, living rough and sleeping hard—strong, muscular men, who worked "from jackass to jackass" and lived lives of manly independence, steadied by unremitting toil. They might well, occasionally, have broken out like this. Harris goes on—

"Such affairs were pretty well understood to be only jokes, and no ill-will is allowed to be borne about them afterwards. We took nothing for the liquor, though several offered to pay their 'whack.' I could not reconcile it to my conscience to take any payment for it, for it would not do to tell them how it had been disposed of; and unless we had let them pay for what they had not had, that seemed unavoidable. There was likewise another reason of a more serious and painful character. One of the 'topmen'"—the top-sawyer in

the pits where the planks were laboriously cut out of the cedar logs—"was a sad, brutal fellow when intoxicated; and in going home he quarrelled with his pitman, and gave him a blow from which he never recovered. The poor fellow had first to leave off work, then go to the settlement and put himself under the doctor's hands, and at last, after lingering a few weeks, died. I almost felt as if his blood was on my head, and from that day forth have never either sold or given to anybody spirituous liquors of any kind."

The two young men did well enough out of the Hunter cedar brushes to combine a little trading with their timber-getting. They went shares with another man, during their third year at the work, in a small coasting vessel, and this shipping venture proved extremely profitable, as it might easily have done, judging from the figures Harris gives in his book.

"The whole of the parties cutting on the river," he says, "had run short of flour, tobacco, and tea, three most profitable articles. We bought our tea at 2/6 and sold it at 6/-; our tobacco (good Hawkesbury) at 1/-, and sold it at 3/-; our flour we made about 60 per cent. on."

He draws a delightful picture of the scene of their last location in the forest, where they spent more than twelve months, for the solitude and loneliness of which they found themselves well rewarded when they retired from the business. They had been guided to this place by one, Jack the Liar.

"Numbers of the trees were six feet in the barrel without a limb, and so thick that, as they lay on the hillside, after they were cut down, I could barely lay my hand on the top of them at 10 and 15 feet from

the butt. They were generally sound, and many of them as sound as stone pillars, and they lay for the most part on the hillsides, so that rolling them to the pit was effected by merely slackening chocks away from them in front, instead of heaving them along by handspikes and lever, as is done on level ground. . . .

"We kept to one hut all the time, having fixed ourselves deep down the descent of one of the hill points in a sort of basin, where five creeks met, so as to be near the water and the work. It was a lonely place, where you heard nothing but the perpetual splashing of the creeks, and once or twice a day the thunder of falling trees, or sometimes in the still, warm noon the startling note of the coachman bird, or the not less wonderful mimicry of the mocking-bird imitating the shrill grating of our files in sharpening the saw, so exactly that we often could not but believe that some other pair had come and set in close to us. Countless, and motionless, and gigantic, stood the forest army, up and down all the hillsides around us; in strong contrast to this stood the great red piles of plank, squared with mathematical exactness, which spoke of man and labour. How simple the lesson that contrast read, and yet how grave! The toil-bearer must have a motive; he must want something that he has not; he must be unhappy."

Reading his book, however, a century or so after it was written, one would not easily believe that Alexander Harris was ever an unhappy man when he was in the Australian bush he learned to love so well.

Chapter IV

CONVICT COAL

THE arcadian picture of life in the tall forests on the hills through which the Williams River winds, peaceful and beautiful, to its juncture with the Hunter, just above Raymond Terrace, presented in the last chapter is startlingly contrasted by that which another contemporary chronicler draws of the brutal and horrible conditions under which the earliest mining was carried on at the Coal River settlement.

It was purely a penal settlement, that little village at the mouth of the Hunter that has developed into the great industrial centre of Newcastle—a place which, despite the many vicissitudes of its adolescent years, is surely destined one day to be the Birmingham of the Commonwealth. As a convict depot it was quite easily able to compare in conditions of infamy and sordidness with anything that has gained unenviable notoriety for similar establishments at Port Arthur, in Van Diemen's Land, or in lovely and lonely little Norfolk Island out eastward in the wide waters of the Tasman Sea.

A remarkable and terrible human document, but of the greatest historical value in co-ordinating the story of this country's first beginnings, was discovered some

years ago by Mr. C. H. Bertie, then Sydney's Municipal Librarian, and subsequently published in an edited form in London, under the title of "Ralph Rashleigh." With due acknowledgment to its publishers (Jonathan Cape), one cannot refrain from quoting from the series of vivid and often startling pictures of Newcastle, as it was little more than a century ago, contained in the book, and, although some of them are almost unbelievably horrible, contemporary records confirm their fidelity to fact and freedom from exaggeration. Indeed, they are so simply drawn as to carry conviction from the mere reading of them. "Rashleigh" was, of course, a fictitious name, but there can be little doubt that his story is a true representation of the merciless and inhuman conditions under which prisoners of the Crown were so often worked in the penal servitude of the bad old days of the convict "System" in Australia.

Here is a description of the fashion in which prisoners exiled to the Coal River were sent there from Sydney in those days. The vessel employed as a convict transport on this occasion was the small schooner "Alligator." It reads unmistakably as having been written by a man who had himself experienced the miseries of that nightmare voyage between Sydney Heads and the mouth of the Hunter River.

"The prisoners were marched aboard and stripped naked before being sent down into the hold, the floor of which had been spread with shingle ballast. As each man got below he was secured by his fetters to a chain which was strongly fastened to the planking of the floor. It was impossible for the men to walk, or even to stand, the height from the floor of the hold to

the upper deck being not more than three and one-half feet, and the hold was so small that, when all the prisoners had been crammed into it, they were squeezed so tight that they could only lie down upon their sides, body to body. The heat was intense, and the steam from the perspiring unfortunates rose through the hatchway in a cloud, as if the hold were afire. . . .

"The 'Alligator' weighed anchor and cleared the harbour with a fair wind, but, once out at sea, ran into a fresh gale in which she pitched violently, shipping water. The waves, breaking over the sides, worked through the hatchway into the hold, cooling the fevered wretches; but as the seas remained big it was not long before the hold was awash, and the prisoners were obliged to kneel or crouch in order to keep their heads above water. . . . The voyage lasted forty-eight hours, and, during the whole time, the ration for each man was half a mouldy biscuit and a drink of water.

"Filthy and stinking, the prisoners were at last landed at Newcastle, where they performed with joy the compulsory ablutions in the sea, after which clothing was served out to them. They were then paraded and inspected by the military Commandant, a man of such ruthless severity that he had earned the title of the King of the Coal River."

The Commandant at Newcastle at this time was Major James Morrisset, of H.M. 48th Regiment, who afterwards held similar positions at Bathurst and Norfolk Island. Wherever he went, a reputation for mercilessly cruel disciplinary methods went with him, and it is in no way exaggerated by tradition. He is, perhaps, the outstanding personality of Newcastle's penal settlement days—a man as hard as steel and as

unrelenting as Fate. With 70 of his shipmates on this pleasant voyage, Rashleigh was drafted to a pit known as the "Old" coal-mine, to distinguish it from another shaft recently sunk. Its situation is said to have been somewhere about the site of the greens of the Newcastle Bowling Club, not far from the crest of the cliffs south-eastward of the city.

"A grim-visaged overseer received them at the pit-head, and called his clerk to 'take the likenesses' (this was merely to have a good look at each man, so as to be able to identify him when necessary) of the new victims of his oppression. The clerk was a miserable, half-starved, brow-beaten creature, who did his duty trembling with fear at the threats of his superior; after which the men were lowered singly in a bucket to the bottom of the shaft.

"Rashleigh gazed into the gloom, full of wonder at the strangeness of the scene. Seven low passages opened out from the space at the foot of the shaft, dimly lit by small lamps; but at the end of each tunnel was a blaze of light. In the glow, like some glimpses of inferno, he saw groups of men working feverishly, who redoubled their energies at the sight of the hated overseer, who had brought down the new hands. As this brute stepped out of the bucket, he criticised the manner in which a waggon had been filled by a gang who had just dragged it along to be unloaded. Cursing and abusing them, he set upon the men in charge, with a stout cudgel, and in a few moments had knocked every man down, and then beaten them until they rose again, driving them back to refill the waggon down the passage along which they had just come.

"He came back out of breath, and, dividing the

newcomers up into parties of sixteen, gave each gang a waggon. He then led the way along one of the galleries into a great open space, where large coal fires were burning, by the light of which, added to that of their lamps, miners were busy hacking out masses of coal. The overseer stopped at an immense heap, and called the overseer in charge of the section.

"Take these new chums in hand, and set 'em on?" he ordered shortly.

"Their work was to fill the waggons with coal, drag them to the opening at the shaft's foot, and tip out the contents according to the direction of the man in charge there. They set to work immediately, and continued without rest under the blows and curses of their taskmaster until night, when each man received a small portion of boiled maize grain, a morsel of salt beef, and water. They slept naked in any part of the workings, the heat being so excessive that any clothing or covering only added to the misery of life. No bedding was provided, but those who were not too exhausted to make the effort could scrape together enough dust to make a comfortable sleeping-place. The convict miners remained underground the whole week, and on Saturday afternoons were taken to the surface to wash themselves and their clothing in sea water. When their clothes were dry they were marched to the convict barracks, and confined there until Monday morning.

"Bathing in the sea on his first Saturday afternoon, Rashleigh noticed that there was scarcely one of the older miners whose back or buttocks were free from the marks of the lash. He remarked to one of the men

that it seemed as if punishment was plentiful at Newcastle.

“‘Aye, that’s something there’s no lack of, anyway,’ answered the miner, with a laugh. ‘And so you will know soon, for tomorrow is pay-day.’”

His informant was correct. At the first streak of dawn on Sunday the prisoners were paraded in a yard, where a series of triangles had been set up, with a large corps of flagellators in attendance. The presenting of arms by the guard and the roll of a drum announced the arrival of the Commandant, in full uniform.

“‘Dash my old duds,’ whispered a fellow next to Rashleigh, ‘look out, my lads! The cove has got on his fighting-jacket, so it’s going to be a regular field-day.’”

“The clerk opened his book, and the overseer of the miners was called. He made a loutish reverence to the Commandant, and handed in his punishment list.

“‘Charles Chattey!’ shouted one of the scourgers, acting as announcer.

“‘A little duck-legged Londoner stood forward.

“‘What’s he been doing?’ demanded the Commandant.

“‘Neglecting his work, your honour,’ answered the overseer.

“‘One hundred lashes.’

“The orgy of punishment continued hour after hour until not less than fifty men had been lashed, none with less than seventy-five stripes, the Commandant taking obvious pleasure in stimulating the jaded scourgers with threats of punishment. When, some time after nine o’clock, the convicts were dismissed, they were served with breakfast of boiled corn and half a pound of

indifferently cooked meat, which comprised the full daily allowance of each man."

Rashleigh toiled for nine miserable months in the coal mine, receiving some 650 lashes during this period, and finally, being charged with "incorrigible laziness" by the overseer, was given another taste of the cat-o'-nine-tails and sent to work in the limeburners' gang on the northern side of the harbour.

Over at Stockton, on the low-lying shores of Limeburners' Bay, it is still possible to locate the pits whence the unfortunate prisoners sent to this dreadful place of extra punishment dug the shells that were burned to make lime in the adjacent kilns. It was a terrible hell-in-a-hell, where the mining awards of Major Morrisset's day were paid with interest to the pioneers of the Hunter River coalfields. There can be no doubt that it was by far the most atrocious place of punishment in convict Australia throughout the whole of "The System's" brutal existence. Neither Norfolk Island, Port Arthur, Macquarie Harbour, Moreton Bay or Cockatoo Island ever staged a more impressive display of man's inhumanity to man than this awful place of torture at the mouth of the Hunter.

It was "on its own"—a place so infamously cruel as almost to sicken anyone who contemplates its anguished story to-day. Flogging was perpetual, and the poor, raw-backed victims of the unspeakable penological methods of the day had to load the barges from the settlement with heavy sacks of lime that they carried on their lacerated shoulders through the shallow water to the anchored craft, frequently falling into the salt water, as they staggered out to the barges under their heavy burdens. Raw backs, torn and bleeding from

recent lashings, to be treated with lime and salt water in this fashion! Little wonder is it that many preferred to drown in the shallows when they fell beneath their loads, rather than to struggle to the surface to be rewarded with another dose of the "cat" for wetting the lime.

Those low shores, fringed with mangrove, are arid and waste and depressing, even to view casually without any knowledge of the wicked tyranny that once made them a place of unimaginable terrors, and they look to-day as though something evil still haunted them. There was never any place so woeful in Australia as the camp for "incorrigibles" at Limeburners' Bay, about the time when Major Morrisset ruled the Coal River settlement with a red-hot rod of iron and the soul of a devil.

Chapter V

THE SAILING PACKETS

WHEN maritime steam communication was established between Sydney and Newcastle in 1831 by the "Sophia Jane," a regular packet service had already been in operation for some time. As has been mentioned, this was first of all carried on by a cutter named the "Eclipse," and, after she had been pirated by runaway convicts, the "Lord Liverpool" took her place.

Of the condition of Newcastle and the Lower Hunter about this time we are able to learn from another contemporary source, perhaps even more valuable than the chronicles of Alexander Harris and the unknown author of "Ralph Rashleigh." In 1829, Surgeon Peter Cunningham, R.N., who had made a number of voyages to New South Wales as Surgeon-Superintendent, or officer-in-charge, of the involuntary passengers of several convict transports, published in London his "Two Years in New South Wales," which still remains one of the most readable and trustworthy accounts of the Australia of the eighteen-twenties. The following extract gives an excellent idea of the conditions existing in and about the Valley of the Hunter when the Newcastle Packets changed over from sail

to steam, and makes particular mention of the "Lord Liverpool."

"The settlement of Hunter's River, to the right or north of Sydney," says the Doctor, "is divided at present into the counties of Northumberland and Durham, the first lying between the Hawkesbury and Hunter's Rivers (the distance between which is fifty-five miles), and the second, lying to the north beyond Hunter's River, and stretching upwards along its banks; but the limits of neither are yet properly defined.

"By land, you proceed either by way of Windsor or Richmond. From Windsor to Patrick's Plains, on Hunter's River, is a distance of seventy miles in a direct line, but nearly of ninety miles when following the convolutions of the road, which is, as yet, but a rugged bridle-path over the mountainous ridge called the Bulgar, quite unfit to take even an empty cart by. Patrick's Plains, again, are twenty miles from Wallis Plains, the head of loaded-boat navigation, and forty miles from the town of Newcastle, at the outlet of Hunter's River on the sea-coast. By the circuitous route of Windsor, therefore, Patrick's Plains are upwards of one hundred and twenty miles from Sydney; but a practicable route for a road has been surveyed direct from Parramatta thither, which will reduce the distance to Sydney upwards of thirty miles, crossing the Hawkesbury low down by a punt.

"A fine little cutter packet, named the 'Lord Liverpool,' sails weekly between Sydney and Newcastle (in distance seventy-three miles), twelve hours' easy sail: cabin fare (including provisions, wine, and spirits), £1/6/-, and the accommodation excellent, the vessel

having been formerly a pleasure yacht in India. Several other craft pass backwards and forwards between the two places, also, as irregular traders, all taking good freights, the principal return being coals—Newcastle supplying the Sydney market with that necessary article. Two passenger boats ply between Newcastle and Wallis Plains, conveying goods upwards, on freight also, which goods may be there secured in a safe store appertaining to Messrs. Powditch and Boucher, on payment of a small commission. There is only a bridle-road as yet between Newcastle and Wallis Plains; but a cart-road, which is now in progress, will ere long be completed. The distance by land I have already stated at twenty miles, but on account of the convolutions of the river, it amounts by water to nearer seventy.

“Close to these places, indeed, there is part of the river, so tortuous, that, although the distance between the two points (that is, between Lieutenant Close’s wharf and Powditch and Boucher’s wharf) be not three miles by land, it is twenty-five miles by water. In freshes boats can go no higher than Lieutenant Close’s, and this being a high-lying dry place, and abounding in fresh water, will doubtless eventually be the situation pitched upon for a town. Carts, therefore, must be sent thither from Newcastle until the road is completed: but from Powditch and Boucher’s store, loaded drays may pass by the banks of the river for seventy miles farther, at least, crossing to the right bank at Mr. Singleton’s ford, head of Patrick’s Plains, the country beyond this being too rugged on the left bank to admit of carts proceeding much higher on that side. When the made road from Newcastle to Wallis Plains is

finished, an excellent cart-road might, by the employment of a gang of twenty men for a fortnight or so, be completed, upwards, to fully ninety miles distance from Newcastle; the country being generally so even, so thinly timbered, and clear of brush, that the banks of a few rivulets and gullies only require to be lowered, or bridges thrown across, nature having done the rest. But the road, even as it is, cannot be found much fault with, there being only two or three difficult gullies which require, in crossing, a partial unloading of the drays.

"Newcastle is distant about one hundred and twenty miles from that extensive pastoral country, Liverpool Plains; and after the road from Newcastle to Wallis Plains shall be completed, a stage-coach might be driven that distance (by a cart road of fourteen miles only near Liverpool Plains) without much inconvenience, so easy of communication is this part of the country."

The landmarks of the sixty-mile voyage between Sydney Heads and the Coal Island (Nobby's) succeed one another quickly as you pass them by at sea nowadays, but in the years when the small sailing packets had to beat up very often against stiff nor'-easterly winds there was longer time to study them as they slowly slipped by to port, or sometimes "stayed put" whilst the little vessels made slants out to sea, and then back again towards the coast, in temporarily vain endeavour to complete their run northward. The voyage of the convict schooner "Alligator," with the sweltering cargo of naked and suffering humanity in her four-foot-high hold, shackled to the chain running fore and aft amidships, described by "Rashleigh" in the preceding chapter, must have been one of these

frustrated efforts, since she took two days to reach her destination.

Many hundreds of times, by day and by night—though more frequently by night, since passenger traffic between Sydney and Newcastle along the coast had become a nocturnal affair long before his day—the writer has passed up and down the old-time sea-track since first he followed it as a very small boy, somewhere about 1877, in the yacht-like paddle-steamer, “Coonanbarra.” On a daylight voyage northward a few years ago, assisted by the master of one of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company’s cargo steamers, with the chart before him on the bridge, he studied all the bays and beaches and headlands of that picturesque stretch of the shore of East Australia, and, as this book is very largely concerned with the ships that have passed as a regular thing up and down the same seaway during the last 150 years, he will request the reader to stand beside him and the captain of the “Kindur” whilst he makes the voyage again in these pages. We must remember that we had a closer and clearer view of the coastline that sunny day than was usually afforded Captain Livingstone when he navigated the “Lord Liverpool” to the Coal River *circa* 1830.

When the steamer swings round Outer North Head as she leaves Port Jackson, she passes by a magnificently complete geological section of the sedimentary rocks of the “Hawkesbury” series upon which Sydney is built, extending between the perpendicular corner of the headland to an almost equally “up and down” formation in North Point, once past which she opens up Cabbage-tree Bay—the little known but rightful designation of the glittering waters breaking in long

lines of surf on curving sands, which is popularly known as Manly Beach.

Then comes the majestic joint called Queenscliff, with the little Freshwater Beach (named by Governor Phillip when he walked overland to Broken Bay in 1788, and now foolishly re-named "Harbord") lying between it and Curl Curl Head. Another long stretch of gleaming yellow sands extends between the latter rocky bluff and Dee Why Head, and the next far-projecting promontory is marked on the chart as Long Point, but is better known as Long Reef.

After that stretches a succession of beaches—bounded by Narrabeen Head, Bungan Head, and Bulgolo Head—extending to the South Head of Broken Bay. Round the corner is Little Head, with Palm Beach lying between its steep seaward escarpment and Barrenjoey Head, on top of which stands the first of the two lighthouses on the coast between Port Jackson's North Head and the mouth of the Hunter.

In between Bulgolo Head and the South Head of Broken Bay, a great cavern in the cliffs, plainly visible from seaward, has given to the high bluff in which it occurs the picturesque title of the "Hole in the Wall."

Broken Bay is a wide indentation, surrounded by densely-wooded ranges and well fitted with the name bestowed on it by Captain Cook when he sailed up the coast in H.M.S. "Endeavour" early in 1770. Through its broad opening the waters of the Hawkesbury find their way into the Tasman Sea, and the voyage from Sydney Cove in Port Jackson to the mouth of South Creek, near Windsor (N.S.W.), is the oldest line of sea-borne traffic in Australia—next to it in order of seniority comes the one we are studying from the

bridge of the "Kindur" this morning. Almost directly north of Barrenjoey, across the sunlit waters of the estuary, Hawke Head points a long finger due south, and lying back in the bay is the aptly named Lion Island, which the Admiralty chart distinguishes as Eliot Island.

West Reef and East Reef are set out from the rocky coastline between Hawke Head and the most southerly projection of Cape Three Points—these are all James Cook's names—which is broken into Third Point, Second Point and First Point. Between the latter and Broken Head lies a pretty indentation known as Balbaring Bay. Immediately south of this is Terrigal Harbour, where small shipping may, on occasion, find shelter from southerly weather.

The next rocky promontory distinguished on the chart is Upright Point, with a little boat-harbour not far south of it, and a few miles further on is the entrance to Tuggerah Lakes. Tuggerah Reef lies almost east of the entrance, and a couple of miles nor'-east of it a "bomborah" breaks at some distance from the shore when the swell rolling in from the Tasman Sea is heavier than usual. North of it is Norah Head, with its tall white lighthouse, a little more than half way between Port Jackson and the Hunter.

Like Lavender Bay in Sydney Harbour, Norah Head is a little deceptive in its name. "Lavender" does not commemorate an early-day planting of the fragrant English flower on the shores of the pretty bay opposite to Sydney Observatory—it was the name of the boatswain of the convict hulk "Phoenix," moored in the inlet a century ago. Nor is the "Norah" the name of some Irish colleen beloved of an early navigator of the

coastline—it is properly “Norah Bungaree,” a purely aboriginal designation of a natural feature of the scenery.

Flat Island, a little further on, looks like a point of land, and between it and Catherine Hill Bay the coast is rocky and dangerous-looking. The shore is then mostly cliffs to Moon Island, lying just off the narrow, shallow and tortuous entrance to Lake Macquarie. From here a long, curving beach stretches to the well-named Red Head, perhaps the most striking landmark between Sydney and Newcastle. Passing by about eight miles of mountainous and wooded coastline, broken by Merewether Beach and one or two smaller indentations, our course lies direct to Nobby’s; the old Coal Island, at the entrance to the Hunter, where the “Kindur” turns sharply westward and runs into the harbour between the two long lines of breakwater. Over on the right, seaward of Stockton, is Pirate Point, where the lads who stole the “Norfolk” came ashore in 1800. And so we run into the King’s Wharf, after making passage along the length of coast with which we are most concerned in the story of the Newcastle Packets.

Chapter VI

THE "SOPHIA JANE"

ON the morning of June 12, 1831, the first steam-driven vessel to make the voyage between Port Jackson and the Hunter River sailed up the coast from Sydney to Newcastle and inaugurated the cargo and passenger steamer service which has functioned along the same trade route ever since. The present Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited, can trace its descent through various organisations directly from this small steamer which was, a hundred and twelve years ago, the most remarkable and famous craft afloat in Australasian waters.

The "Sophia Jane," under the command of her part-owner, Lieutenant Edward Biddulph, R.N., had been in New South Wales waters just a month when she began to ply between Sydney and the Green Hills, the picturesque name of the picturesque old town which has long been known as Morpeth, situated at the head of the navigable waters of the Hunter. "The Sydney Gazette" of May 17, 1831, records her arrival in New South Wales as the most notable news item of the week.

"On Saturday last," says the colony's first newspaper, edited and owned by Mr. Robert Howe, son of

George Howe, the founder of Australian journalism, "the inhabitants of Sydney had the extreme gratification of seeing for the first time a steam vessel floating in their harbour, the 'Sophia Jane' having arrived from England during the night. This being the commencement of steam navigation in Australia, we shall enter into as many particulars as we have been able to collect, for most of which we are indebted to 'The South African.' The name of the vessel is the 'Sophia Jane.' She is commanded by Lieutenant Edward Biddulph, R.N., who is, we believe, part owner. She was built in 1826 by Barnes and Miller, the pupils of the celebrated Watt, the only ones who have carried on his work for themselves. The whole length of her deck unimpeded (as all vessels of this kind are) is 126 feet; her breadth 20 feet; her burthen 256 tons; her power 50-horse. In smooth water she will travel eight miles an hour. She draws only six feet of water, and could easily be made to draw only five. She was originally constructed for the almost exclusive accommodation of passengers, and the greater portion of the room is adapted for this service. Her principal employment, hitherto, has been in the carrying of passengers between England and France, and to various parts of the British Islands. No expense has been spared for the comfortable accommodation of her passengers, and her apartments are of the finest description. She has three separate cabins—one for gentlemen, one for ladies, and another for steerage passengers. In the gentlemen's cabin 16 beds can be made up, in the ladies' 11, and in the steerage 20, and in cases of emergency extra beds can be prepared, making in all 54. Being intended in the first instance for Calcutta, where wood is the

cheapest fuel, she is as well adapted for its consumption as for coal. She originally cost £8,000, and her present value is estimated at £7,500. She has brought out an experienced engineer, and a duplicate set of all the necessary apparatus. She was ultimately fitted out especially for Sydney as a private speculation. On her passage she touched at Pernambuco and the Cape. At the latter place they were extremely desirous of purchasing her to ply between Algoa Bay and Table Bay. A public meeting was held in the Commercial Exchange for the purpose of forming a Joint Stock Navigation Company, but the attempt failed, and she prosecuted her original course. At present the arrangements are too immature to enable us to say how she will be employed, but in all probability she will form a regular packet for the conveyance of both goods and passengers between Sydney and Newcastle. Most certainly do we wish her every success, and congratulate our fellow colonists on so valuable an acquisition for their pleasure and advantage."

In the issue of the same journal of May 21, further reference is made to the engrossing subject of the wonder-ship.

"We have derived from the most authentic sources the following particulars:—She is 250 tons, builders' measurement, and 150 tons register, four years old, but ran only some two years, chiefly in the British and St. George's Channels. The engine is of the most approved construction, and she was esteemed one of the fastest vessels ever built. She has frequently towed ships of the largest class, and the last time she was thus engaged was tugging the 'General Kydd' from Gravesend to the Downs. Should the 'Sophia Jane,' we are

told, meet with the encouragement her spirited owners expect, they will send out another vessel of nearly 500 tons, with an engine of 100-horse power, to ply between Sydney and Van Diemen's Land."

It is really probable that the "Sophia Jane" was one of the fastest steam vessels of her day, since she was able to negotiate the run between Sydney Heads and Nobby's—60 miles—in 7 2-3 hours, which represents a pace of about eight knots an hour. The maximum speed of ocean-going vessels in 1840—according to Sir William White in his Presidential address to the British Association in 1899—was only 8½ knots. So something of an "ocean greyhound" made its appearance on the Australian coast in 1831. It is strange that such a synonym for Lieutenant Biddulph's little steamer does not seem to have occurred to the fertile journalistic imagination of Mr. Robert Howe in any of his eulogistic descriptions of the "Sophia Jane" published in the "Gazette" about this time. Mr. Howe was particularly apt at this sort of thing, as will be evident from his "Gazette" article printed below.

When the "Sophia Jane" had undergone the over-haul necessary after her long voyage from England to Australia, Lieutenant Biddulph gave a demonstration of her capabilities in Sydney Harbour which was reported with impressive enthusiasm in the columns of the "Gazette." It may be quoted in full as testimony to the tremendous sensation her arrival in Australian waters had made—such a sensation as not even the latest thing in flying-boats is able to make to-day. Nothing like this excursion had ever before taken place in Port Jackson.

"Yesterday was a proud day for Australia," it reads,

“a day that ought to be placed high in the calendar of her improvements—a day to which her sons and daughters, if alive to the true interests of this country, will in future years look back with admiration. The first efficient exhibition of steam navigation in this fifth quarter of the world was beheld by the select few who had adventured on board the ‘Sophia Jane,’ on Friday, the 11th day of June, 1831. True, the ‘Surprize’ had, as was fully reported in a recent number, performed a trip to Parramatta some days before; but that was altogether so diminutive a display of the tremendous power of steam, that it cannot for a moment be placed in competition with the magnificent masterpiece of yesterday. It must also be granted that the ‘Sophia Jane’ had herself performed one trip before that which we designate her first. On Sunday last she towed the ship, ‘Lady Harewood,’ bound for England, out of the harbour, and accomplished her task in the most gallant style; but this was no more than a private trip, intended for the amusement of a few of the captain’s friends, and therefore was not considered by us as entitled to any particular notice. But yesterday was the grand—the memorable affair. The ‘Sophia Jane’ put forth all her powers. She showed what the ingenuity of man had been able to contrive—to dispense with oars and canvas, and to urge rapidly onward, in defiance of wind and weather, a vessel of large dimensions and heavy burthen.

“Early in the morning the Captain gave a breakfast on board to his Excellency the Governor and a distinguished party of ladies and gentlemen. The vessel performed a gentle trip round Dawes Point, Darling Harbour, and Goat Island, and in so fine a style that

His Excellency and all the fashionable guests were pleased to express the highest encomiums on the scientific construction of the vessel, and on the admirable skill with which she was managed.

"But the grand display was reserved for the public excursion to Middle Harbour, and we are really at a loss for terms to convey to those who were never on board a steam vessel, an adequate conception of the scene.

"Soon after 11 o'clock, a signal gun having been previously fired, the 'Sophia Jane' loosed her moorings in Sydney Cove, and began her adventurous journey. The manner in which she threaded her way through the shipping, without any assistance whatever, filled everyone with admiration. She crept in and out with the utmost exactness, as if she had possessed all the attributes of a rational creature; and when fairly free from the cove her energies were allowed unlimited play, and away she went as on the wings of the wind. Her velocity was astounding. She actually flew through the water. The ordinary motion of a vessel leaving the harbour, compared with hers, was absolutely contemptible. Before the passengers well knew they had started, they found themselves abreast of Pinchgut Island; and ere they had digested this astonishment, they looked up, and lo! they were in the very mouth of the Heads! Here a gun was fired, and Mr. Watson, the pilot, came on board. Then away she dashed up Middle Harbour—crossing bars, skimming flats, and threading needles, in the finest style imaginable. She went about five or six miles inland. In many places the Harbour was so narrow as to resemble a mere canal. The scenery was beautiful, and was brightened

by one of the most charming days earth ever saw. Having reached the utmost navigable point, she veered round, and again ploughed her way towards the Heads. At 2 o'clock the company was summoned to the mess room, where they found a sumptuous cold collation, served up under the direction of Mr. Bax, of the Australian Hotel. Every luxury that could be devised was spread upon the hospitable table, garnished with the choicest champagne and other wines, ale, porter, &c. The passengers had already seated themselves at table when they were conscious of a very peculiar motion, the vessel rolling in the most regular and agreeable manner; but supposing it to be only imaginary on their sitting down, for the first time, in the cabin, no particular notice was taken of it; but when the meal was finished, and they returned on deck, what was their astonishment to find themselves actually at sea—aye, rolling upon the wide ocean, the boundless expanse before them, and the Sydney Heads far behind! However, they greatly enjoyed the unexpected novelty of their situation, and while in the act of expressing their surprise, behold! the miraculous steamer was again rounding Bradley's Head, on the full wing for Sydney, with both tide and wind against her. She performed the trip from between the Heads to Fort Macquarie, a distance of full five miles, in 26 minutes and 42 seconds—the shortest period in which it was ever accomplished by a sailing ship, with wind and tide directly in favour, being 42 minutes.

“Having honoured Sydney with a hasty glance, to assure the good folk that all was well, she shot past with the velocity of thought, directing her course to

Kissing Point. Thither she had a delightful trip, and returned to Sydney, the distance being about 10 miles, in less than three-quarters of an hour.

"The day was the most favourable that could be desired. Not a cloud obscured the sky; the sun shone in all its chastened splendour, and a gentle breeze from the westward seemed to refresh and invigorate the joyous passengers. Part of the band of the 39th regiment added to the other delightful pleasures of the excursion the charms of martial music.

"Captain Biddulph acquitted himself in the handsomest manner. His duties, as the navigator of the vessel, were performed with the utmost zeal and discretion, while his polite assiduities for the comfort of his passengers were all that became a commander and a gentleman. Everything, in short, went off in the very best style. Not one blunder—not one mistake. All was order and precision.

"The accommodations between decks are truly admirable. The state cabin is appropriated exclusively to the ladies. The fair sex are always entitled to the best, and certainly their claim is fully conceded on board the 'Sophia Jane,' their apartment having every convenience they could desire, together with superb looking-glass panels, which reflect their charms with all the fidelity of truth.

"The dining-room is a noble apartment, being arranged with the most ingenious regard to utility and comfort. But those who would fully appreciate this wonderful achievement of human skill and enterprise, must take a trip, and judge for themselves. Her first voyage to Newcastle will be performed this day, and we hope she will have abundance of passengers. She

deserves well of the colony; may she receive that liberal share of public patronage and support of which she is so eminently worthy!"

Good Robert Howe, son and successor of Australia's pioneer printer! Never elsewhere in "The Sydney Gazette," or out of it, have you expressed yourself so nobly! But, truly, that voyage round Our Beautiful Harbour on that lovely winter day so long ago was an Occasion—with a capital "O."

On her first voyage to Newcastle the "Sophia Jane" left Sydney at 7.13 a.m. and arrived at the King's Wharf in Port Hunter at 3.13 p.m., having been detained a little by towing another ship to sea. She took $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to make the run up the river to the Green Hills (Morpeth), and was exactly three hours coming down on the following day. The run back to Sydney from Newcastle was completed in 7 hours and 40 minutes.

This rate of speed was kept up for many years, and the steamer continued to trade on the coast until 1846, when her engines were transferred to the newly-built "Phoenix." The "Sophia Jane" was then broken up, and her successor was wrecked on the North Head of the Clarence River in 1850. The engines of the pioneer steamship in Australian waters are still covered by the sands at the spot where the "Phoenix" came to grief. They were partly exposed by the effects of a storm some forty odd years ago. Should it ever be desired to salvage them as relics of our maritime beginnings in steam navigation, there would probably be few difficulties in digging them out of the beach at the mouth of the Clarence.

Chapter VII

"WILLIAM THE FOURTH"

BEFORE we turn to the development of the Hunter River district by the various corporations and privately owned steamships which have traded for 110 years between Sydney and Newcastle, we must glance for a moment at the first really "Australian" steamer—the "Currency Lass" of our earliest shipping—that navigated the eastern side of the continent in the infant days of its British existence. From an Australian point of view, there is more of interest in the story of the "William the Fourth" than in that of any of the earlier vessels. She was building at Clarence Town, on the Williams River, when the "Sophia Jane" arrived in the colony, and how well and faithfully her designers and constructors carried out their task is evidenced by the fact that, after thirty years of hard work on the Australian coast, she was still fit to be sold into the China trade, where she continued to render excellent service for a considerable time longer.

Incidentally, it may be noted that the ship's associations seem to have rendered inevitable the name bestowed upon her. She was built at Clarence Town, the settlement on the river named after King William, which had been called after him when he was the

Duke of Clarence, before succeeding his brother, George IV, on the throne of Great Britain and Ireland. Hardly any other name could have been appropriately chosen for her.

Mr. Joseph Hickey Grose, a prominent Sydney merchant, had the idea of building a steamer locally before there was even a rumour of the impending arrival of the "Sophia Jane," and entrusted the realisation of his design to two newly arrived Scottish ship-builders, Messrs. Marshall and Lowe, who had recently come to New South Wales from the West Coast of South America. On account of its timber resources, the upper waters of the Williams River were selected by these gentlemen as a suitable locality for the carrying out of their enterprise, and for years afterwards they continued to build both steamers and sailing craft just below Clarence Town on the ways laid down for the construction of the "William the Fourth."

The ship was launched on October 22, 1831, and arrived in Sydney under temporary sailing rig on November 23. Here the engines imported from the works of Fawcett and Co., of Liverpool (Eng.), were installed in the hull by Mr. Alexander Lyle Pattison, of the Phoenix Foundry. Mr. Pattison had been brought to Sydney in 1827 to erect Mr. Robert Cooper's engine at Blackwattle Swamp, and took a prominent part in the development of early Australian steam navigation, having been one of the committee of the Australian Steam Conveyance Company formed to build the steamer, "Australia," for the Parramatta trade, in 1834. He was drowned by the capsizing of a boat at Kiama in 1838. The engines, of the "jet condensing" type, were hardly powerful enough to give

the ship much speed—it was less than eight knots an hour—but their importer had to consider cost, and they were the best he could afford. “The Sydney Herald,” in one of its issues of September, 1831, states that they have “been much improved by Mr. Pattison, of the Phoenix Foundry.”

The length of the “William the Fourth,” from stem to stern, was 80 feet, and she had a beam of 15 feet amidships, whilst 20 feet was the extreme width of the sponsons round the paddle-boxes. Her perpendicular dimensions from the flush deck to the keel were 7 feet, whilst those of the after cabin were 6 feet 6 inches. The ladies’ cabin was 12 feet long, and the gentlemen’s 16. The outside planking of the hull was of flooded gum, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in thickness, and her deck planking was of colonial pine, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick. She had two masts and was schooner rigged, and, as may be realised from her portrait, was a very pretty and yacht-like model of a ship. The new steamer’s first voyage to Newcastle is thus referred to in “The Sydney Gazette” of February 21, 1832:—

“That beautiful specimen of colonial enterprise, the ‘William the Fourth,’ made her maiden trip to the Hunter last week. She left Barker’s Wharf at 7.30 in the evening, cleared the Heads in 44 minutes, and made Newcastle at 6 the following morning.” In the same issue appears this advertisement from Mr. Grose.

“The ‘William the Fourth’ leaves Sydney every Monday evening at 7; will receive and discharge goods at the store of Mr. William Walker on Mrs. Close’s land, Green Hills; cabin, 25/-; to Newcastle, 20/-; steorage to Newcastle, 12/6; Green Hills, 15/-.”

The advertisement is signed by Captain Taggart,

and the Green Hills, of course, was the original name of the present township of Morpeth.

The commander of the "William the Fourth" was well known to early day pioneers as the commodore skipper of the Hunter River passenger trade, owing to his having been master of the "Lord Liverpool" sailing packet for some considerable time prior to the introduction of steam navigation. He was subsequently master of the "Sophia Jane," "Maitland," "James Watt," "Victoria" and "Phoenix." From 1832 until 1835 the "William the Fourth" was almost exclusively employed in the Hunter River trade, though now and again she made a few trips to the Hawkesbury, navigating the river almost as far as Windsor. Needless to say, there was a much greater depth of water in the stream then than there is now. As in the case of the Hunter, the clearing and cultivation of the land on the banks has resulted in the gradual silting up of the river. In 1835 she was withdrawn from the Hunter, and put on the Sydney-Port Macquarie run, under the command of Captain William Parsons. Subsequently she was for some years engaged in the Illawarra trade.

When the Australian Steam Conveyance Company was formed in 1834, another corporation came into existence which had as its *raison d'être* the establishment of an opposition to the "Sophia Jane" and the "William the Fourth" in sea communication with the Hunter River. In April, 1833, a meeting had been held in Sydney, at the office of Mr. A. B. Spark, at which it was proposed by Mr. Thomas Walker, of Concord, and seconded by Mr. R. C. Pritchett, "that an association be formed to build in the Colony of New South Wales a steamer of 200 tons, and to order from

Great Britain two engines of 40-horsepower each." The cost of the two engines was estimated to be, when installed in a vessel, £4000. Mr. Lowe, of Clarence Town, tendered to build a ship of 250 tons, everything complete, for £3,300, anchors, blocks, and rigging, to cost £360, whilst other "extras" were to be covered by £500. The total cost was to be £8,150, and there were to be 400 shares of £25 each. The Secretary was to be Mr. Thomas Smith. The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of the Hunter River Packet Association.

An order was sent to Messrs. Scott and Sinclair, of Greenock, for two engines of a combined horse power of eighty, and a contract entered into with Marshall and Lowe to build the new steamer at Clarence Town. The machinery arrived in the colony at the beginning of 1836, and was installed in the "Ceres," as she was called, which had been launched on the Williams during the previous year. She is described in the newspapers of 1835 as being 134 feet long, and 38 feet wide, the deck as most spacious—almost, it was said, "like the deck of a 50-gun ship, or the old 74." The paddle-boxes, we are informed, "do not put out at the sides like those of other steam vessels, but are enclosed by, and form part of, the deck." There were six enclosed cabins for families, and in the "Great Cabin" twenty sleeping berths were fitted up. The ladies' cabin contained twelve berths, and in the fore-cabin or steerage, twenty passengers could be accommodated. With 150 tons of dead weight in her holds, the "Ceres" only drew seven feet. She must have been a fine little craft, but her active career was only a short one of six months, for she was wrecked whilst running

from Sydney to Newcastle on a sunken rock between Bird Island and Norah Head.

In an interesting and valuable paper read before the Historical Society on June 30, 1904, the late A. B. Portus had some remarks to make concerning the durability of the timber used by Marshall and Lowe in the construction of the "William the Fourth" and "Ceres," as well as of other ships which they launched at Clarence Town. "As with the 'William the Fourth,' he says, "the builder used flooded gum extensively in the hull of the 'Ceres'; some ironbark was fitted where desirable, and the decks were of Norway pine. The cost of the steamer was favourably commented on at the time, a comparison being made between British and Colonial built vessels. The cost of the 'Ceres' is given at £10 per ton; while in England a vessel built of similar material could not, we are told, be constructed for less than £15 per ton. The lifetime of a vessel built of Australian flooded-gum was at that time estimated at 20 years. How very far short of the endurance of this excellent timber this forecast was can be judged by the fact that the oldest steamer now in service in Australia was built of flooded-gum, near Raymond Terrace, on the Hunter River, 60 years ago. I refer to the 'Kangaroo,' now running in the Yarra."

The wreck of the "Ceres" was a disastrous climax in the affairs of the corporation which had built her and was only destined to reap any return from its enterprise for a brief half year. On September 16, 1836, Mr. Thomas Smith, the Secretary of the Hunter River Packet Association, announced that its transactions would be wound up as soon as possible. Not long before the little ship came to grief, the Association

had decided to build another steamer, but the project fell through, and although an attempt was made to revive the H.R.P.A. in the form of another company, nothing definite was done until June, 1839, when the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company was established.

An interesting description of the Hunter River shipping trade in 1834 is given by the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, D.D., in his "New South Wales," and it may be quoted here in parts as illustrating the conditions of coastal and river navigation in the years immediately succeeding the arrival in the colony of the "Sophia Jane" and the first employment of the "William the Fourth." The latter portion of it is apposite enough now, as comparing the luxuriantly wooded condition of the country along the banks of the lower river with its present treeless aspect after more than a century of settlement and cultivation.

"A packet for goods and passengers," he writes, "used formerly to ply between Sydney and Newcastle once a week, goods and produce being conveyed to and fro, between Newcastle and the head of navigation of the river, distant about 20 or 30 miles from the coast, in a barge. Several other vessels also plied on the main river, and the other two navigable streams that fall into it, carrying direct to Sydney the produce of the farms along their banks; but the annual loss of life in these vessels, on the coast between Sydney and Newcastle, was very considerable. . . . The arrival of a steamboat in the colony in 1831, to ply between Sydney and Hunter's River, was therefore of incalculable benefit to the latter district, as well as to the colony in general. There are two now on the course, each of which makes

a trip to Hunter's River once a week, and there will shortly be a third of much larger size. The steam-boat leaves Sydney at six o'clock in the evening, reaches Newcastle about the same hour next morning—the ocean part of the voyage being thus performed during the night—and arrives at the Green Hills, or the head of navigation of the Hunter, at the distance of four miles from the town of Maitland, about 11 o'clock, the whole distance being about 120 miles. The town of Newcastle, I have already observed, has somewhat the appearance of a deserted village. It is reviving, however, though rather slowly, and is likely eventually to become a place of considerable importance, as it is situated in the centre of the great coal-field of the colony, and as the Bay forms a good harbour for small vessels. . . .

"Hunter's River, or the Coquon, as it is called by the aborigines, runs in an easterly direction for upwards of 100 miles, from the high range of mountains in the interior to the Pacific Ocean. It is formed from the junction of various smaller rivers, that traverse these ranges in various directions to the right and left. It is navigable, however, only for about 25 miles in a direct line, or about 35 by water, from the coast. At the distance of 20 miles by water from Newcastle it receives another river of considerable magnitude from the northward, called the Williams River or the Dooribang, and at the head of navigation, or about 35 miles from Newcastle by water, it receives a second river, called Patterson's River, or the Yimmang, each of which is navigable for a considerably greater distance than the principal stream or main river.

"For the first 15 or 20 miles by water from the

mouth of the river the land on either side is generally low, swampy, and sterile, though for the most part thickly covered with timber, but higher up and along the banks of the two tributary rivers the soil for a considerable distance from the banks is entirely alluvial and of the highest quality, and the scenery from the water exceedingly beautiful. Let the reader figure to himself a noble river, as wide as the Thames in its lower part of its course, winding slowly towards the ocean, among forests that have never felt the stroke of the axe, or seen any human face till lately but that of the wandering barbarian. On either bank the lofty gum-tree, or eucalyptus, shoots up its white naked stem to the height of 150 feet from the rich alluvial soil, while underwood of most luxuriant growth completely covers the ground, and numerous wild vines, as well as flowering shrubs and parasitical plants of the alluvial land are indiscriminatingly called by the settlers, and their long branches covered with white flowers in the very water. The voice of the lark, the linnet, the nightingale, is, doubtless, never heard along the banks of the Hunter, for New South Wales is strangely deficient in the music of the groves. But the eye is gratified instead of the ear, for flocks of white or black cockatoos, with their yellow or red crests, occasionally flit across from bank to bank, and innumerable chirping paroquets, of most superb and inconceivably varied plumage, are ever and anon hopping about from branch to branch."

Nothing like that is to be seen on the Lower Hunter now.

Chapter VIII

RIVAL CORPORATIONS

THE second steamer to reach these shores direct from Great Britain was the "James Watt"—though the "Tamar" had traded on the New South Wales coast after a short period of service in Van Diemen's Land waters. The "James Watt," built for the Glasgow-Liverpool trade, had not been a success in the old country, nor did she prove to be such in New South Wales. She was very well engined and luxuriously appointed, but some miscalculation had been made with regard to her draught which affected her speed, and although she was tried out as a trader to almost every port in the mother colony and Van Diemen's Land, she was always a disappointment to her owners, Messrs. Grose and Street, of Sydney. During 1839 and 1840 she lay idle at moorings in Port Jackson, and was finally sold in 1842 to the newly formed Hunter River Steam Navigation Company, who employed her at intervals, with unsatisfactory results, in the Clarence River and Moreton Bay trades. She was finally broken up in 1847. In July, 1837, she had been the first steam vessel to anchor in Port Phillip, and was later the pioneer of steam navigation in Moreton Bay.

And now we come to the beginnings of the Hunter

River Steam Navigation Company, which was established in 1840, with a capital of £40,000, subscribed in 2000 shares of £20 each. A meeting was called by public notice in the press, signed by John Eales, of Duckenfield, near Morpeth, and provisional directors were appointed—Messrs. Eales, Hosking, Lord, Drake, Abercrombie, Steel, Capel, R. Scott and Ward Stephens. This number was reduced to six when the company was incorporated.

During the course of the meeting Messrs. Edye, Manning and A. B. Spark opposed the formation of the company, stating that there was already building in Sydney a steamer—the “Victoria”—designed for the Hunter River trade, and that the early construction of another was contemplated. However, the formation of the company was completed, in spite of these protests, and it was decided to have built in England three iron steamers of light draught and the highest speed possible. Two of them—the “Rose” and “Thistle”—were built by Fairbairn and Co. at Millwall, on the Thames. Their dimensions were 150 feet in length, with a beam of 20 feet, and the draught was 6 feet 6 inches. Their trial speed on the Thames was 12 statute miles an hour—then a very high one. The “Shamrock” was built by Paterson, of Bristol, where her engines were also constructed. She was of the same length and horse power as the others, but her beam was greater by two feet. She was a very fine sea boat, and was the crack steamer of her day in the Sydney, Melbourne and Tasmanian trades. The “Shamrock” was rigged as a three-masted schooner, and had a raised quarter-deck, whilst the others were flush-decked and two-masted.

By this time steamers had ceased to be novelty in

Australian waters. In addition to the "Rose," "Thistle" and "Shamrock," there were the "Corsair," "William the Fourth," "Maitland," "Sea Horse," "James Watt," "Victoria," "Sovereign" and "Tamar." Between the three ships of the H.R.S.N. Co. and the "Victoria," their unrelenting rival in the Hunter River Trade, there was the keenest competition over the time of passage between Newcastle and Sydney, and "The Sydney Herald" of April 21, 1842, thus refers to it:—"The 'Victoria' arrived in Sydney at 10 minutes past 6 yesterday; the 'Rose' afterwards. Leaving Newcastle, the 'Victoria' was two miles ahead, and kept so for several miles, when a north-easter sprang up, and she set square sails; the 'Rose' had none. The 'Victoria' gradually gained three miles. The 'Rose' wants slipping, and it is expected that she will make the passage in an hour less than the 'Victoria.' If she does, she must run fast." The betting on these speed contests was sometimes very heavy, and on one occasion as much as £100 was reported as offered on the one steamer against the other. However, the "Victoria," unable to compete successfully with her rivals, was withdrawn from the Hunter River trade, after running in it only a few months. In July, 1842, she was sent to the East to be sold, and for the next eight years the H.R.S.N. Co.—which became the Australasian Steam Navigation Company in 1851, with a capital of £320,000—enjoyed a practical monopoly of the Hunter trade, whilst they extended their operations widely round the Australian coastline.

After the gold discoveries of the early 'fifties, shippers of cargo and produce from the Hunter valley began to entertain a grievance against the A.S.N. Com-

pany because of the lukewarm attention given to their interests by that corporation. The "Maitland" had been sold to a Melbourne firm, and the 'Rose' and "Thistle" had become too small to cope with a greatly increased volume of trade, mainly due to the requirements of the number of "new chums" flocking to the diggings from all over the world. Meetings were held in the district of the Lower Hunter, and it was decided to incorporate a purely local company, to be known as the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company, with a capital of £40,000. Following on the lines of the pioneer company, they decided to import three steamers of slightly larger size and lighter draught than the "Rose," "Thistle" and "Shamrock." These vessels were the "Hunter," "Williams" and "Paterson," and they were built by MacNab and Clark, of Greenock. The "Hunter" was 150 feet long, had a 20-foot beam, and drew six feet of water. She attained a speed on her trials of 15 statute miles an hour. The other two ships were identical with her but for the fact that they had 2 feet 6 inches more beam.

But the A.S.N. Co. was not idle whilst the lately formed company was building its fleet. They had ordered six new vessels, and their speedy passenger steamer, the "Illalong," had arrived in the colony before the "Hunter." They had also purchased the "Collaroy" from a firm which had imported her as a speculation. She had been built by Laird, of Birkenhead, and was one of the first vessels in these waters with feathering floats on her paddles and oscillating cylinders, and although she was not fast, she remained for a quarter of a century the favourite passenger steamer on the Newcastle-Sydney run.

When the "Hunter" arrived rivalry became very keen between that vessel and the "Illalong"—much the same sort of thing as the strenuous competition between the "Rose" and the "Victoria" fourteen years earlier. The "Hunter" was the more frequent winner, but there was not a great deal between them, and the "Paterson" and "Williams," when they made their appearance on the coast, were soon able to demonstrate their fitness to hold their own. For a year and a half the two companies were engaged in the cheerful occupation of cutting each other's throats, but eventually a compromise was arranged. It was decided that the rival steamers, instead of leaving Morpeth together in the early morning, should start at 7 a.m. and 2 p.m., and from the Sydney end at 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. They ran these hours month about, and the plan was found to work well, since it was of the greatest convenience to the public. It continued in operation for many years.

For the next 35 years two separate lines of steamers traded between Sydney, Newcastle and Morpeth, at the head of navigation of the river, but it is only possible here to give a brief outline of the developments that took place in the Hunter River steamship trade between 1855 and 1891, when competition ceased and the companies then in existence amalgamated—an event induced by the opening of the Sydney-Newcastle railway.

In 1856 the H.R.N.S.N. Company purchased the steamer, "Fenella," and two years later it was decided that the "Hunter" should be sold and a new steamer built, to be called the "City of Newcastle." This decision was opposed by some of the shareholders, and

in consequence of the divided feeling over the matter, the directors published a circular which gives an interesting record of the operations and experience of the Company, but it is too long to be quoted here in its entirety. One or two extracts from it, however, may be given.

The directors begin by reminding shareholders that, on the first establishment of the Company, the object of its formation was publicly announced to be "to promote the welfare and prosperity of the Hunter River District by securing constant, sufficient and reasonably inexpensive means of transit to and from the Metropolis." This pledge they claim themselves to be "most anxious to maintain." And then is given an extremely interesting *resume* of the competition encountered from the A.S.N. Company, with some of the methods employed upon both sides in waging the trade war.

"Hardly had the Company commenced operations," says this document, "when a very determined opposition was opened by the A.S.N. Company, and continued until the futility of the attempt to drive the Company from the line or force its dissolution became apparent; then endeavours were made to compel the amalgamation of the Companies; but these and various other efforts in the same direction having failed, an agreement was made, *terminable at a month's notice*, to run at equal fares and corresponding times, allowing thus to each Company an equal opportunity for trade. At this period a large number of Sydney proprietary joined our Company, buying up the shares of the local constituency, so that about one-half of the capital, namely, 2,704 shares, became vested in Sydney resi-

dents, and of these a very large proportion were purchased by members of the A.S.N. Company. The significance of this movement became the more apparent when, on a later occasion, the Chairman of the Company publicly stated to the Directory of our own, that though he held about 900 shares in his own name, he held also about 300 shares in the names of others, thus giving him unseen influences against which the Directors of this Company cannot protect their constituency.

“Thus, you will observe, that the character of this Company, which, at its foundation, was largely local, was considerably changed. We do not allege that all our Sydney proprietary are antagonistic to ourselves in their desires, but it is certain many must have a ‘divided duty’ and divided interests, which (with justice to each Company) it is utterly impossible to perform or support. The trade lies between the two Companies; those who have shares in both doubtless desire to do it with the least requisite capital, while those whose investments are *wholly* with us desire that their Company shall maintain its prestige, and secure its present success and freedom from aggression by being ready to oppose those who unnecessarily attack them. If our Company sought monopoly—if it aimed at exacting undue profit from the just gains of the importers and producers of the district—then we might pause in asserting our principles to the public; but desiring only to secure ‘constant, sufficient, and reasonably inexpensive means of transit,’ we submit our duty is *so* to direct the affairs of this Company, that its foundation principle may be maintained, as far as it

possibly can be, consistently with the interests of its members."

In the end, the counsels of the directors of the H.R.N.S.N. Co. prevailed, they went on with their programme of development, and, a little more than twenty years after their appeal to the shareholders, as quoted in part above, saw the A.S.N. Co. withdraw from the Hunter River trade. But it was a long, stern fight, and few points were conceded upon either side.

The "Fenella" was sold in 1859, and early in 1860 the "City of Newcastle"—wrecked in 1878—was added to the H.R.N.S.N. Company's fleet. In 1862 the "Morpeth" arrived, and the "Williams" was chartered, being sold to the A.S.N. Co. in the same year. In 1862 the A.S.N. Co. brought out that beautiful steamer, the "Coonanbara," and employed her in the Hunter River trade. On July 12, 1866, the A.S.N. Company's "Cawarra" was wrecked on the dreaded Oyster Bank, the grave of so many ships seeking to enter Port Hunter in bad weather, and appalling loss of life occurred. Everybody on board was drowned, with the exception of one man, who was saved by the only survivor of the "Dunbar," wrecked at Sydney Heads in 1857.

The "Maitland"—wrecked on Cape Three Points twenty-seven years later—arrived on the run in 1871, and in the same year, after long and faithful service, the "Paterson" was sold. Three years later, the steamer, "Kembla," began to compete in the Newcastle-Sydney trade, and the competition was afterwards carried on by the Newcastle Steamship Company. In 1880 the A.S.N. Co. retired from the Hunter trade, having disposed of the "Coonanbara," "City of Bris-

bane" and the other vessels to the Newcastle Steamship Co., who afterwards acquired the "Boomerang." In the same year the H.R.N.S.N. Co. had purchased the "Lubra." The "Lady Bowen" was added to their fleet in 1882.

The H.R.N.S.N. Co. brought out the "Namoi" early in 1884, and commenced to run her on the "Sixty-mile" in May of that year. The N.S.S. Co. countered with the "Newcastle" at the end of the year, and these two ships, fine vessels of their class, continued in the trade for about forty years, before old age and infirmities compelled their sale to the ship-breakers.

The railway between Newcastle and Sydney was opened in 1887—though the Hawkesbury Bridge was not completed for a couple of years—and the consequent decrease of trade led to the amalgamation of the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company with the Newcastle Steamship Company in 1891. The new corporation, under the name of the Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited, began operations on January 1, 1892. The present Company, as will be seen by those who have had the patience to follow this chronicle so far, is the lineal descendant of "Sophia Jane" and "William the Fourth." Whether the bar sinister comes into this genealogical tree the writer cannot quite make up his mind, but there may possibly have been some sort of morganatic marriage between Lieutenant Biddulph's pretty Sophy and the handsome little ship named after Britain's "sailor King."

Chapter IX

A PERSONAL NOTE

IT is many years—more, perhaps, than he likes to admit, even to himself—since the writer first travelled as a passenger between Port Hunter and Port Jackson, and now, having written some 20,000 words or so from the records, assisted by the chart and a good deal of experience of voyaging up and down the sixty miles of Australian coast with which this book is concerned, perhaps he may be permitted to set down something personal in the way of reminiscences connected with the story of the Newcastle Packets.

They are recollections that go back to making a first voyage of any sort in that yacht-like and beautiful little craft, the "Coonanbara," somewhere about the year 1878, when he wore petticoats, and was still a very long way off learning to smoke or drink or swear. They are very dim recollections, and mainly consist of a vague remembrance of having been brought out of a railway train across a high foot-bridge and a windy wharf, with a peculiar smell about it hitherto quite inexperienced, into a strange and unfamiliar condition of existence, when he was put to bed in a ladies' cabin, told to go to sleep like a good little boy, and passed a more or less wakeful night in a heaving and rolling

condition of existence that was altogether different from anything that had so far transpired in his short life on the Upper Hunter.

A rushing, roaring sound of tumbling waters, unpleasant manifestations of female sea-sickness, and a vague realisation that the night had been "horrid" to everyone but himself are his principal impressions of this first voyage from Newcastle to Sydney—though there was one transcending impression that has never been obliterated. The beauty of Port Jackson at 6 o'clock on a summer morning is the most vivid memory of very early childhood that is his, and it has compelled him to a belief that Sydney Harbour could never be anything else but very beautiful at any hour of the day or night. Owing to that early experience, he is constitutionally unable, in these latter days, to turn into his berth, when making the voyage to Newcastle, before the steamer has passed between the Heads.

The "Namoi" was a wonder-ship when first she began to run, and was generally regarded by the inhabitants of the Hunter Valley and the Liverpool Plains as being the very last word in maritime efficiency and comfort, so far as ocean travel might be considered. She was equipped with the still novel electric light, a bath-room, a nobly proportioned saloon with roomy cabins opening out of it, and her deck-cabins were all that a sense of luxury could demand.

But when the "Newcastle" came out, it had to be conceded to the N.S.S. Company that they had "gone one better" than their older rivals. She was a handsome model of a ship, and, with her three funnels and yards on the foremast, a most unusual one for a paddle-steamer. And she was extraordinarily fast—a regular

ocean greyhound, so far as the Sydney-Newcastle run was concerned. Indeed, her record of three and a half hours from Sydney Heads to Nobby's (with a southerly gale behind her) has never been approached by even the most modern of her successors. She was built at Kinghorn, in Scotland, by J. Key and Sons, in 1884, and began to run between Port Jackson and the Hunter at the end of that year.

She was a smaller ship than the "Namoi," having only a gross register of 1251 tons against that vessel's 1414, but had accommodation in separate cabins for a considerably greater number of passengers. It was found, however, that she was something of a coal-eater, so one of her boilers was removed, and the after funnel went with it, the change making a good deal of alteration in her appearance. When she was broken up some years ago, the last ocean-going paddle-steamer in Australian waters—if not in the world—retired from business. Those of us who were young when these two old ships were young also will always regret their disappearance from the Hunter River trade.

A large room occupying the whole of the upper floor of a venerable stone building in Sussex Street, Sydney—one of the city's business thoroughfares where some aspect of old Sydney still lingers—contains a collection of pictures, models and documents relating to early steam navigation on the Australian coast which is probably unique. A high, vaulted apartment, with a timbered roof supported by massive beams stretching from wall to wall, it extends from front to rear of the premises, so that, of the two sets of windows lighting it, one looks out into busy Sussex Street and the other commands a view of the shipping in Darling Harbour

which gives the street its reason for being. From end to end the big room is adorned by pictures and models of steamers, the dates of whose launching range between a couple of years ago and the early 'thirties of the last century. And in the safes and cupboards with which it is equipped in a massive and dignified fashion, are many folios and documents, ancient and yellowed with age, and inscribed in the penmanship that has become a lost art, in which is written the story of the sea-borne trade between Port Jackson and the Hunter River.

The chamber is the board-room of the Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited—but it is also a filed record of a very important chapter in the story of the Commonwealth. For the organisation to which it belongs is in the direct line of descent from that one which came into being a little over a century ago as the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company. And to the original corporation credit is due, more than to any other agency, for having maintained, in "the days before the gold," the greater part of the trade between the capital of New South Wales and that vast area of territory lying between the Harkesbury and the Barwon Rivers. Everything from the north-west of the old colony, and a good deal from south-western Queensland—or the Moreton Bay Territory, as it was then—came down the Hunter Valley to Morpeth at the head of navigation, and whatever was not shipped overseas from Newcastle was carried from Morpeth to Sydney in the steamers of the several companies that were the ancestors of the one whose present affairs are directed from this nautical museum in Sussex Street.

For a long time the whole of the local Australian

shipping trade was confined to voyages between Sydney and Hobart and Sydney and the Hunter River. Neither Melbourne nor Adelaide began to count until well after 1835, and Queensland before that was little more than a penal settlement at Moreton Bay, on the edge of a vast and unexplored section of the continent. So it is not to be wondered at that steam navigation in Australian waters should have made its beginnings along the sixty miles of coast lying between the North Head of Port Jackson and Nobby's Island at the mouth of the Hunter. It was unquestionably the only run in which the "Sophia Jane" could be profitably employed when, as detailed in a previous chapter, she inaugurated the era of steam-driven shipping on the Australian coast in the middle of 1831.

In the Sussex Street board-room there is a water-colour drawing of the steamer, "Phoenix," which was built in 1846 to take the engines of the "Sophia Jane," about to be broken up. The latter vessel had been purchased from her original owners by Mr. J. H. Grose, and was sold by him in 1839 to J. T. Wilson, who shortly afterwards got into financial difficulties and absconded from the colony. Two of the defaulter's ships—the "Sophia Jane" and the "Tamar"—were sold by order of the Supreme Court, and were purchased by the General Steam Navigation Company. In 1846, her then owner, Mr. Edye Manning, determined to break up the "Sophia Jane," and to build a new steamer to be equipped with her engines. So the smart little packet, "Phoenix," came into being—only to be wrecked, as has been mentioned, near the North Head of the entrance to the Clarence River.

It is interesting to examine the genealogical tree of

the present line of what may be called, as in the title of this volume, the Newcastle Packets. As we have seen, our first steamship traded for ten years on the Sydney-Morpeth run, in competition with other privately owned ships, until they were all put out of business by the formation, in 1840, of the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company, which imported the "Rose," the "Thistle" and the "Shamrock," iron vessels of the very latest model and design. This body became the Australasian Steam Navigation Company in 1851. A local corporation, the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company, was established in opposition to the A.S.N. Co. in 1852—some details from this organisation's minute book are given in the next chapter—and imported the steamers, "Hunter," "Williams" and "Paterson" in 1855. In 1880 the A.S.N. Co. retired from the Hunter River trade, and sold several of their steamers to a newly formed body called the Newcastle Steamship Company, which ran them in opposition to those of the H.R.N.S.N. Co. for eleven years, adding new vessels to their fleet from time to time. In 1891, owing to decrease of trade, as a result of the Newcastle-Sydney railway having been opened, the two businesses amalgamated under the title borne by the company now controlling the trade.

The old-time ships whose portraits adorn these walls were usually yacht-like in design, clipper-bowed and graceful of aspect, and possessed much more pleasing lines than most of the units of the shipping to be seen in Sydney Harbour at the present day. They belong to a generation that has passed, and there is no one living now who can remember any of those that navigated the Hunter River before the era of the gold

discoveries. By those of us who are middle-aged and over, many of the later steamers which used to ply up and down the coast in the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century will be very well remembered. They are nearly all in this collection.

One of the framed documents hanging on the walls of the board-room is a letter from the equerry-in-waiting to his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to the directors of the H.R.N.S.N. Co., thanking them for having carried the Duke from Clontarf, in Middle Harbour, to Sydney, after he had been wounded by the Fenian O'Farrell, in 1868, when the latter attempted the royal visitor's assassination by means of a pistol-bullet. Close beside it, in a glass case, is a builder's model of the modern steamship, "Hunter," sold by the Company to Chinese buyers a few years ago. Her old-time namesake of 1855 was, as her portrait in this collection shows, a most graceful specimen of the naval architect's art, and must have been one of the prettiest ships that ever floated in Port Jackson. Of other vessels that have maintained the service between Sydney and Newcastle during the last hundred years there are many fine pictures. The collection has a value in an historical sense that it is impossible to exaggerate, and it is well displayed in its present setting.

Of all the many ships in which the writer has made the voyage between Sydney and Newcastle, there is none of which he has pleasanter memories than the old "Newcastle," of whose dismembered hull he took a melancholy farewell one morning a few years ago, as he watched her being towed down Port Jackson to be sunk at sea outside the Heads. Of that sad



“Thistle.”

[See Page 70]



“Shamrock”

[See Page 79]

occasion he wrote something in a Sydney newspaper at the time that he would like to quote here.

“ . . . One pondered many things about the ‘Newcastle’s’ long career at sea. She had gone, for one thing, a good way in her time. In a notebook one did a little arithmetic. Three voyages a week to Newcastle and back make 420 miles, since the distance from wharf to wharf is about seventy. If she did this for about 48 weeks in the year—the Company’s ships are usually in dock for about four in each twelvemonth—that would come to a little more than 20,000 miles per annum. Allow her 30 years of such steaming, out of her career of forty, and you get 600,000 miles—that is, about two and a half times the distance from this planet to the moon! . . . And there was another queer notion to consider—that the ‘Newcastle’ is the last of the type of vessels, on the Australian coast at anyrate, that began to navigate the Seven Seas under steam propulsion. She is the direct descendant of the queer little craft with which Henry Fulton astonished the United States and the world on the Hudson River in 1807; of Henry Bull’s ‘Comet’ on the Clyde, in 1812; of David Napier’s 90-ton, 30 h.p. ‘Rob Roy,’ which paddled herself between Glasgow and Belfast, in 1818; of the ‘Enterprise,’ which steamed from England to the Cape of Good Hope in the phenomenal time of 57 days; of the ‘Sophia Jane,’ the first steamer to reach Australia from Britain, in 1831; and of the ‘Great Eastern.’ All of these were paddle-boats—though the last-named had a screw-propeller as well as her enormous side wheels.

“ . . . And the ‘Newcastle’ is the last of them—the last of a breed that traces its lineage from the beginnings

of steam at sea. Motor-ships and oil fuel have begun another era in the history of ocean navigation—but the handsome, comfortable, dependable old vessel limping down Sydney Harbour to her grave might be supposed to say, as she passes by modern editions of herself at their anchorages—‘Ah, well—I have done my work. See to it, my friends, that you do yours as well as I have done mine, and as my sisters have done theirs.’ It would not have been unseemly on their part had they dipped their ensigns to the old, dying ship. But none of them did so.”

Chapter X

AN OLD MINUTE BOOK

ONE of the most valuable relics of the Newcastle Packets contained in the big steel safe in the Sussex Street board-room is an ancient Minute Book of the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company, containing records of meetings of the Board of Directors from May 27, 1852, to October 15, 1855. It is apparently the sole survivor of a series of such volumes, and is beautifully written in the copper-plate caligraphy which the advent of the type-writer has rendered a lost art.

One or two extracts from this book may throw interesting sidelights upon the sea-borne commerce of the Hunter at a period when Australia was rapidly developing, not only by reason of the gold discoveries, but also as a result of the extension of the pastoral industries. It is to be remembered that practically all the trade of northern and north-western New South Wales, ninety years ago, came through Morpeth, and was carried to Sydney for distribution to the world beyond these shores in the steamers of the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Co. and the Australasian Steam Navigation Co. The entry relating to the preliminary meeting, since it is of so historic a character,

may be given in full. This is an exact transcription from the old MS. book.

"At a Preliminary Meeting of parties interested in the formation of a New Steam Company held at the 'Northumberland Hotel,' West Maitland, on Thursday, the 27 May, 1852—

"PRESENT:

"Bourn Russell, Esq., in the Chair; Messrs. W. C. Wentworth, James Dickson, Peter Green, George Yeomans, William Nicholson, Otto Baldwin, William Newcham, John Nott, H. S. Grenfell, Isaac Gorrick and George Faircloth.

"RESOLVED:

"That it is expedient to establish a Steam Company to be called the Steam Navigation Company, to consist of 4000 shares, at £10 each, to be raised in the following manner, viz.—

"On Shares not exceeding five in number a deposit of £5 per Share, and the remainder by a bill at six months' date;

"On Shares exceeding five in number a deposit of £3 per Share, and the remainder by equal instalments by bills at four, eight and twelve months' date;

"That three boats of a proper capacity and power to navigate the River Hunter be obtained by the Company;

"That an Act of Council be applied for, limiting the liability of the Shareholders to double the amount of their respective shares;

"That as soon as three-fourths of the number of

Shares be subscribed for, immediate steps be taken for the accomplishment of the objects of the Company.

“(Signed) BOURN RUSSELL,
“Chairman.”

At the next meeting, held on Saturday, June 12, 1852, it was resolved, *inter alia*, “that the name of the Company be styled ‘The Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company,’ with a capital of £40,000, to be raised in £10 shares as follows, viz.—

“Twenty-five per cent. on the Allotment of Shares, and the remainder by equal instalments by bills at 6, 12 and 18 months;

“That the Management and Control of the Company shall be conducted and carried on in the Hunter River District.”

A provisional committee was appointed “to receive applications for Shares, allocate the same, and to take steps to commence business,” consisting of W. C. Wentworth, Esq., M.L.C., Messrs. James Dickson, Peter Green, George Yeomans, William Nicholson, Otto Baldwin, John Nott, N. S. Grenfell, Isaac Gorrick, Samuel Cohen, John Portus, Charles Boydeell, James Solomon, Edward Ogg, Samuel Owen, John O'Regan, A. Windeyer, W. Kingston, William Dangar, Bourn Russell, Charles S. Pitt, William Wade, Saml. S. Dickson, Richard Jones, Henry Gooch and Andrew Lang.

The Northumberland Hotel, where these preliminary meetings were held was the most famous hostelry of the northern districts of New South Wales. It stood for many years on the site at present occupied by the Police Station at West Maitland. Meetings

were held there until September 15, 1852, when they began to take place at "Mr. Dickson's, Maitland." They were continued at this address until October 8, when they are recorded as being held at "the Company's Office, East Maitland." In the meantime, Mr. James Thompson had been selected, from twelve applicants for the position, to act as "Secretary and Collector" at a salary of £125 per annum. He was to give his whole time for the first month of holding office, and afterwards three days a week.

At a meeting held at the East Maitland offices on April 11, 1854, wharfage accommodation in Sydney, it was announced, had been secured at "the Union or Bray's Wharf," and was leased from Mr. Thomas Bray for ten years. The situation of this wharf was just about in the position where steamers of the Newcastle and Hunter River S.S. Co. berth to-day.

News was received at the meeting held at East Maitland on January 25, 1855, that the first of the Company's new ships, the "Hunter," had sailed for Sydney on September 8, and that the second steamer, the "Williams," was making satisfactory progress in the builder's hands. Captain Petley was in command of the "Hunter," and the first and second engineers were R. Glen and J. Smith.

Minute Book No. 1 closes in January, 1855, and No. 2 is opened with the meeting of February 15.

On April 10, 1855, it was decided that—"The following arrangement for the sailing of the 'Hunter'—to appear in the 'Herald' and 'Empire' daily, and in the 'Mercury' on the days of publication—To leave the Company's Wharf, Morpeth, every Tuesday and Friday at 8 o'clock a.m., and from the Company's

Wharf, Sydney, every Wednesday and Saturday at 10 o'clock p.m. until further notice."

Directors' meetings, later on, were often held on one or other of the Company's steamers at Morpeth, or in their offices at the wharf, where routine business was discharged. The last meeting recorded in the volume took place at the Morpeth offices on Monday, October 15, 1855.

The old Green Hills settlement, known as Morpeth for several generations past, had its day between the years 1831 and 1880. Maitland was the capital of a vast pastoral territory, and Morpeth was its sea-port—not Newcastle. There were coal mines down there, and deep sea shipping to attend on them, but this busy township on the edge of Wallis Plains was the place where the export and import trade was centred. To-day, in the great decaying stone buildings that line the wide main street of the pretty, sleepy little village—still, in its old age, the centre of a prosperous farming community which cultivates some of the best land in Australia—you may read what the place used to be. "Steam to Morpeth," ninety years ago, was one of the really notable advertisements in the columns of the Sydney newspapers. Morpeth had an importance that was quite the equal of Newcastle's—if it did not exceed it. The Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, good Dr. Tyrrell, lived there, as did his successors in the see for nearly half a century, and ruled a diocese that extended northward to Cape York. Over at the other end of the ridge that forms the "Green Hills," the seat of government in this great province of the valley of the Lower Hunter was placed at East Maitland.

A few years ago, shortly before the Newcastle and

Hunter River Company gave up the Morpeth trade, the writer went for a run up the river in the "Allyn River," the little steamer that was the last of her line to and from the sea-going vessels in Newcastle, and the last representative of the dainty packets that navigated these river waters for so many years. Every one of that lovely inland voyage of nearly 30 miles is redolent of Old Australia. We passed by the mudflats off Limeburners' Bay—there, as has been mentioned, the penal system out-helled itself long ago—where the "Sophia Jane," the "William the Fourth," the "Rose," the "Thistle," the "Shamrock," the "Hunter," the "Williams" and the "Paterson" would sometimes stick fast at low water; the wide, rich expanses of Miller's Forest and Nelson's Plains; Raymond Terrace, at the junction of the Williams River; the magnificent estate of Duckenfield; the entrance to the Paterson, and a score of places in between, more or less remembered now only by those who care about legend and tradition.

Long ago, top-hatted squatters and their crinolined ladies, who would discard their city finery at the Northumberland Hotel in West Maitland, and take to cabbage-tree hats and riding-habits, looked out from the poops of the old packet steamers across these rich acres to the purple mountains up the valley, over which lay their rough road homeward. Wealthy store-keepers who had been "old hands," new-chums seeking "colonial experience" on the Liverpool Plains, "Bullocky Bills" from the Big River (the Macintyre) or the Mooki, civil servants of the Lands Department, police, commercial travellers, Scottish immigrants to the Upper Hunter who had listened in their native glens to the eloquent persuasiveness of Dr. John Dun-

more Lang—many men and women, now dead and gone, gazed hopefully across the Hunter lowlands to the lovely Green Hills and the distant purple mountains from the white decks of the dainty packets. Good people and bad people and indifferent people, the little ships carried towards the north and north-west—but some of them were of the best that ever came to any new country. Especially Dr. Lang's lot.

The Company's wharf at Morpeth, before it went "out of commission," was a sort of museum, too—something after the style of its board-room down in Sussex Street. Beside it, a few years back—her remains may still be there—lay a little steamship that was a contemporary of the Newcastle Packets eighty years ago. The "Anna Maria" was a small iron, almost flat-bottomed, stern-wheeler, whose ancient engines carried the date "1861." She was brought to Australia in parts, and put together at Newcastle about that time, and was very familiar with the old-time packets whose holds she used to fill with deck-cargoes of produce from the Paterson and Williams Rivers.

When the writer last saw her—maybe ten years ago—her hull was sound and her uncanny-looking engines could still turn round, and if she wasn't handsome, she was at least notable—like some old woman of the pioneers who had borne the heat and burden of days that were done and might have been too much for weaker vessels.

In point of age at that time, amongst ancient Australian vessels, she probably came next to the "Edina," Howard Smith's venerable trader between Melbourne and Geelong—since gone to the ship-breakers—which is reputed to have carried troops from Great Britain

to the Crimean War. Her master, until not long before the time I last looked over her weird outlines at Morpeth, had been fifty years in the H.R.N.S.N. Company and the N. & H.R.S.S. Company's services, and the wharf she used to berth at when she came to Morpeth was about the same age as herself. As has been pointed out, her owners were no upstart corporation, but direct descendants of that one which gave to little old "Anna Maria," so long ago, her intriguing name.

Who, it may be wondered, was the crinolined Anna Maria after whom she was christened? There is no answer now. Maybe some old slanting tombstone in the Cathedral churchyard at Newcastle, on Campbell's Hill at West Maitland, or in the big graveyard at Sandgate—Newcastle's necropolis—could tell us something of the lady—if we only knew where to look.

And so—although we have not quite done with the Packets yet—we come to the end of this chronicle concerning the maritime developments of a century and more in the commercial and social life of the Lower Hunter River. It is a worthy record and an interesting one, and shows signs of continuance. In spite of the competition of railways and motor transport, and the probable inevitable loss of passenger traffic to the future development of air travel, the present Company's ships still hold their own, with something to spare. Of the changes that have taken place in methods of management and in plant during the hundred odd years that have elapsed since the month of June in 1831, when the "Sophia Jane" made her first voyage from Port Jackson to Port Hunter, and up the river to the Green Hills, there is not room for discussion here. It

may only be said that the present Newcastle and Hunter River S.S. Company, the actual present-day embodiment of the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company, the Australasian Steam Navigation Company, the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company and the Newcastle Steamship Company, strives to maintain traditions, laboriously acquired through almost twelve decades, of efficiency and safety as the watchwords of management in the conduct of the Newcastle Packets. Not a great many enterprises, it may fairly be said, have been so well conducted for so long a time as those which are represented to-day by the Newcastle and Hunter River Steamship Company, Limited.

Chapter XI

A VOYAGE TO MORPETH

IN 1858 there was published in Sydney a small volume of collected prose and verse, originally contributed to various Australian journals, entitled "Peter Possum's Portfolio." The author was a young Englishman named Richard Rowe, who came out to Sydney in the early eighteen-fifties, and after various "colonial experiences," took to writing for "The Sydney Morning Herald" and other newspapers under the *nom de plume* of "Peter Possum." For many years his contributions were widely read and exceedingly popular in Australia. He returned to England eventually, and died in London in 1880.

Rowe had had a classical education, and almost all his literary remains are lavishly ornamented with bits of Virgil, Horace, Cicero and other Latin authors, as well as with odd lines from the English poets of the 17th and 18th centuries. The extract from them printed below is characteristically embellished in this fashion, but the writer has "sub-edited" all such somewhat superfluous matter and has merely presented to the reader Mr. Rowe's unadorned prose, which really stands in need of no garnishing at all. His long-windedness and tendency to moralise are probably due

to the fact that he was being paid "on space" as much as to the journalistic style in vogue during the mid-Victorian period in which he wrote. Nowadays the volume of this description of a run to the Hunter River in one of the Newcastle Packets would be "cut" to about half the space it occupies. But it is the only contemporary record of one of these short voyages that the writer has come across, and he prints it here with some regret that there is not room for it all.

The extract describes a voyage to Morpeth in the paddle-steamer "Illalong," of the A.S.N. Company, and the date of it would have been some time in the early 'fifties. Here are a few of "Peter Possum's" impressions of the run to Newcastle and up the Hunter River to Morpeth, the port of Maitland. It will be noticed that the ship passed by, or merely called at, Newcastle *en route*. Morpeth was the important place in those days, so far as the Packets and their owners were concerned. Mr. Rowe goes aboard the "Illalong" fairly late in the evening. She probably left her wharf in Darling Harbour at much about the same time as the Newcastle steamers leave now—in the neighbourhood of 11 p.m.

"The bulls' eyes in the deck twinkle knowingly when I tread upon them, as if they saw that my boots, so swellish in their upper leathers, stand sadly in need of soling, and chuckled over the discovery. The wheel—its brazen centre just revealed by the glow of the impertinently inquisitive little lights—gazes at the binnacle with its queer, bell-crowned hat, like Polypheme ogling Mother Hubbard by mistake for Galatea. . . . The quarter-boats creak lazily upon the davits. The funnels, with their caulitower heads of

rising steam, look like gigantic pots of foaming beer.

"Figureheads of neighbouring vessels peer in upon me; bowsprits point at me, as if festered fingers extended from their noses in contemptuous 'sight.' Like the very spectres of ships—craft such as that which crossed the Ancient Mariner's track in his wild, lonely voyage—lie the more distant vessels, with shadowy hulls and dimly towering spars. Warehouses, commonplace enough by day, mere prosaic receptacles for 'produce,' loom through the murk, awful as haunted castles. The crane looks fearsome as the tenanted gibbet on a 'barren moor' beneath which a benighted wayfarer suddenly finds himself. . . . Here and there a glimmering lamp pries into the secrets of the black waters, with light all trembling as if it fell upon a corpse's face. . . .

". . . The moon—long awaited for by her patient hand-maidens, the silvery stars—arises in full-face beauty, paving the waters with a road of trembling gold. A less romantic animal is contemporaneous with her. Going below, I find that the mail-bags have just been brought on board—the official who brings them looking very sulky when he beholds upon the cabin-table the luggage of a fellow clerk, who—he for the first time learns—has obtained a few days' leave of absence, which, I presume, will double grim official's duties. Grim official, however, solaces himself by demanding a cigar of the civil black sub-steward, for which, in his perturbation of spirit, grim official forgets to pay; but lighting it at the wrong end, stalks stiffly up the companion-staircase, crushing his hat with an appalling smash . . . as he emerges in indignant majesty upon the deck. Civil black sub-steward loses his

civility, an inebriate consignor of cargo persisting in looking for it in the steward's pantry. . . The dapper, obliging little steward . . . and dainty, obliging little stewardess flit about like Cock Robin and Jenny Wren amongst a lot of rooks; for gruff croaking is the dominant note among the passengers who are now pouring in—lost parcels and pre-occupied berths being the grounds of their complaints.

"Attendant friends, having imbibed valedictory nobblers, rush on deck at the cry of 'Who's for the shore?' and I follow them. The boat is cleared of all but crew and passengers, the moorings are cast off, the gangway is drawn back with a jerking pull upon the wharf, and away we go: past huge, anchored ships, with lights blinking drowsily alow, and brighter lights aloft, making the gaffs seem Aaron's rods bursting forth in golden blossom—past bobbing buoys that look, with their long streaming locks of dripping tangle, heads of sea-monsters (submerged during day), come up to dry their manes, and breathe the cool night air—past Dawes' Battery, stronghold of infantry and pretty nursemaids—past Fort Macquarie, shimmering ghostly-white in the moonlight—past Woolloomooloo's avalanche of hovels—past villa-gardens, where the moonbeams glint from lustrous banana-leaves like love-glances from Spanish eyes, and make the pale blue aloes doubly pale—past Rose Bay's reach of milkwhite sand—past the lighthouse, winking to itself as if it knew a thing or two that the ocean wanted to do in the wrecking line, but didn't mean to let him—past the dazzling lightship—past the Heads, looking over at each other, sadly stern—out into the black, white-crested, surging, hissing waves, coming on, on, on, for ever

and ever, and swept over by that lonely *homeless* sea-breeze—half mournful and half fierce—that always makes me think of the wasted girls with hopeless eyes one sees in London streets at night, hurrying along wind-like—none knows whence, none cares whither.

“Swaying from side to side like a sea-bird, the ‘Illalong’ skims along the billows. From each funnel flutters a smoke streamer spangled with glowing sparks. Far behind stretches a line of seething, creamy foam. Contrasted with the wild welter of the waters, how peaceful seems the pearly sky! And yet, in that calm heaven, a radiant rushing is really going on, that makes man’s fastest, machinery-aided speed far, far less in comparison, than, beside *that*, appears the slowest snail’s pace. Where we see only the fin-poised repose of sleeping goldfish, mighty masses are thundering through space with more than a hurricane’s impetus. So much for the ‘silent stars.’

“The moonbeams fall upon a passing vessel’s swelling sail. White as alpine snow it glistens in this tranquil light, and carries my thoughts back to that far-off night upon a distant sea when we were boarded by the ruthless pirate, Death—who cometh without hail, selects his victim, and then, unmarked, goes over the side again, in quest of other prey in the wide ocean.

“We were becalmed in the tropics. The reef-points pattered on the idle sails like rain, as the ship, frosted with silence by the gorgeous moonlight—deck, canvas, cordage, spars, one blaze of lovely light—lazily rose and fell upon the heaving billows. But in that beauteous sea, round and round the ship, like a sullen sentinel, a grim shark kept his watch. I went below to the ‘Hospital-berth.’ A flickering lamp cast its sickly



“Hunter”



“Collaroy”

gleam on the sick man's pale and clammy brow, as he tossed in his narrow bunk; talked deliriously of scenes and faces far away, and petulantly asking why they should chain him there—when would the ship move on? A breeze sprang up a little after midnight; on went the ship and the shark followed her. At sunrise, gasping forth some message to his mother—fated never to reach her, for none on board knew aught of her or him—the sick man died. Wrapt in the Union Jack, we laid him in the long-boat; and at evening, when the setting sun was tipping the foaming waves with crests of fire, the solemn words were read; the sails shivered as the ship was luffed up into the wind; there was a leaden plunge; a snowy sea-bird flew off to the horizon like a liberated soul; the sails filled again; the ship went swiftly on, and far astern the moonbeams played above the stranger's lonely grave.

"But it is time to turn in. A boisterous gentleman opposed my purpose, when I decided to carry it into operation; inviting me to partake of brandy and water with him instead, and asserting, with swaggering emphasis, that he is 'Ocean's child' and considers 'the delightful motion of the boat to be the rocking of his natural cradle.' I observe, however, that 'Ocean's child' cannot eat the ham sandwiches he orders. He soon grows very white about the gills, and disinclined to talk; and, at length, makes a precipitate retreat to his berth, beside which the black sub-steward (whom he has been chaffing), exulting at his discomfiture, hangs one of those queer little buckets like birdseed holders, and, grinning, leaves him to be lulled to sleep by the 'rocking of his natural cradle.'

"Unfortunates, in various stages of *mal de mer*,

startle the night with moans and hideous uproar. Being pretty well-seasoned myself, of course, I am disgusted at their conduct. By-the-by, is not this the way in which most of us treat a certain *moral* infirmity, also? Happening, from difference of temperament, to be proof against the particular temptation—perchance, possessed by strength of constitution from exhibiting the ordinary symptoms of having yielded to it—how we cry out against our peccant brother who has both eaten of the forbidden fruit, and manifestly has the stomach-ache in consequence! It costs many men nothing to be teetotallers, and yet they plume themselves upon their abstinence as though it were a sunbright virtue. Others again, who have each drunk as much in a night as the object of their scorn would drink in a fortnight, turn up their noses at a poor weak-headed fellow who succumbs to a glass or two, in most ethical disdain. It is edifying to listen to their lectures of satisfaction.

“When I wake the next day—a cool and showery Sunday—we have passed Newcastle and are steaming up the river. This, then, is the far-famed Hunter—muddy as the Thames, with banks as flat as Essex marshes! True, there are some pretty hills in the distance just before you come to Hexham, but, as a whole, the lower part of the Lower Hunter appears to be about as lovely as a plate of soup.

“*Apropos* of hills—I am going to manufacture a parenthetical period, because really I can find nothing at present to describe, except the tall, white, leafless, barren trees, looking, in the dim morning light, like bands of spectres that ought to have been back in Hades a good hour ago—as these, you see, are described already—*apropos* of hills.

"I know nothing inanimate more changeful in its expression than a distant range. . . . But it is of hills that we are talking now. How brilliantly beautiful—freshly beaming as though just born from Chaos—do they look when they blushinglly waken into life again beneath the morning kiss of the summer sunlight; the silvery tissue of their veil of mist transmuted by their lover's fingers, as he lifts it, into gauze of gold. Sweet lavender, or gorgeous purple, is their hue by day; there is what painters call the 'second distance,' more and more cloud-like till they melt into the sky—a very *dream* of hills. The setting sun, with its westerling rays and lengthening shadows, plays strange masquerading pranks with my mountain range, arraying it in motley garbs that alter as you gaze. It runs through the whole gamut of colours. Like a Titanic red-hot saw the sierra glows in the last light of day, embossed upon the heavens—cools into gloomy grey—and then its summits swoon ghost-like in the uncertain twilight, speedily to rise again *beatified* in the hushed and holy radiance of the moon.

"When Thor is abroad, with what solemn sternness, wrapt in their dusky robes, dark blue as the leaden sky above, do the everlasting hills await his coming. He flings his white-hot hammer, cleaving through the murky air a track of blinding light. The awful rumble of his unseen chariot-wheels is heard, and with a proud defiance the mountains echo back the roll. Down comes the rain in one thick, fibrous mass, and the clouds drop upon the hills, steal down their sides, and hide them from the view; but ever and anon the curtain shifts, and like the gods seen by the Trojan amid the tumult of that fearful night when 'sacred Ilion' fell, huge

masses, loftly peaks, look out for a moment on the rush and roar, and then as silently go back in the gloom.

"The sun ascends, and with it rises 'Ocean's child'—intensely nautical once more, now that his 'natural cradle' no longer rocks him. Yonder sulks a youngster going back to school, and there lies a little girl fast going home, as her pale, sunken cheeks, pinched features, and violet veins too plainly show. That party of foul-mouthed old settlers might surely read in her a 'lesson proper for the day,' but the sight affects them not. Within earshot of the dying child, they talk their loathsome smut.

"However, I must not be censorious; for I shall soon need charity myself. It is well that I treated toppers so tenderly a while ago. Seductive Wine! Like Nereid in crystal cave thou smilest in the glass—who can refuse to kiss that ruby lip? But alas! alas! for the 'sermon and soda-water' the day after.

"I land at Morpeth, and proceed to Maitland, intending to go on at once by the mail to Singleton. At the inn from which the machine starts, I fall in with a friend. The sinner enticeth me, and I consent.

"I wake next morning, to find my friend is gone, my money, too; an inconvenient state of things, since I remember enough of my pridian experience to be aware that latterly I imbibed on tick, that my friend was impecunious, and that, consequently, an hotel-bill remains unsettled."

Chapter XII

THE OLD GREEN HILLS

THE valley of the Lower Hunter is almost as full of relics of early Australia as are the vale of Parramatta and the stretch of the Hawkesbury River lying between Emu Plains and Wiseman's Ferry, down below Windsor. Though settlement on the Hawkesbury had its beginnings long before there was anything of the sort on the Hunter, the conditions of pioneering were much the same in the case of both the "senior" rivers of Australasia. The first colonists of the hinterland of Port Jackson sought better country than was available to them in the districts of Sydney and Parramatta, and went westward towards the Blue Mountains in order to find it. And the first free people to push out from the Coal River settlement at Newcastle also turned their steps westward when they began to search for something better than the more or less arid and "hungry" soil of the coastal regions. Naturally they went up the river, and were not disappointed when they came to the rich river flats below the site of Morpeth and the splendid lands that surround West Maitland and Singleton, higher up the valley.

It was the cedar-getters, of course, who opened up the Lower Hunter country, and the first of them—

gangs of prisoners sent up to cut the valuable and abundant timber, who were guarded and protected by armed soldiers—were the original pioneers of the district. After them came the farmers, and after the farmers, as far as the Maitland district is concerned, the coal-miners. The development of the Maitland coal-fields has greatly altered the social structure of the Lower Hunter, but nevertheless it still remains, and must always remain, essentially an agricultural community.

Many years after Richard Rowe ("Peter Possum") had travelled from Sydney to Morpeth in the A.S.N. Company's steamer "Illalong," as described in the last chapter, the writer made a voyage in the S.S. "Archer," belonging to the Newcastle and Hunter River S.S. Co., along the same route. The "Illalong," however, was a passenger steamer running one of her regular trips, whilst the "Archer" was solely a cargo-carrier, shipping merchandise at Sydney for Newcastle and the Maitland districts, and returning to Port Jackson with her holds full of bales of lucerne-hay and other agricultural products of various descriptions. Occasionally she used to call at the Broken Hill Proprietary Company's steel-works at Port Waratah, on her way down the river, and fill up with girders, steel rails, angle-irons and other outpourings of the blast-furnaces and rolling-mills. Sometimes she carried wool-bales transported from Upper Hunter sheep-stations along the Great Northern Road by teamsters who found it possible to undercut the railway rates by carrying back-loading for the store-keepers in their districts.

We left Darling Harbour in Port Jackson somewhere about 9 o'clock in the evening, arriving in Port Hunter

in the dawn of the following morning. After tying up at the King's Wharf for a few hours, while we unloaded what cargo we had for Newcastle, we went on up the river, calling at Raymond Terrace on the way to land whatever we were carrying as freight for that centre of distribution. Then we went on, past the junction of the Williams River, to Morpeth, passing through some of the best of those magnificent lucerne flats which have made the lands of the Lower Hunter famous more than anything else that is grown in their fertile area.

As the ship approached the end of her voyage, the river became more and more beautiful, and the verdant flats, most vividly green in the bright sunshine, were very suggestive of an English countryside. Everywhere were pretty farmsteads, nestling in orchards and lovely gardens, and all the land was green. If the long levels had been divided up into little fields by hedges and stone walls, anyone who had ever been in the Old Country might quite easily have imagined himself back there again. And many of the buildings along the riverside helped out the illusion by being unmistakably of the latter end of the period of Thackeray's *Four Georges*. Here and there were remains of old mills, solidly built of stone, which testified to the fact that the Lower Hunter was once upon a time a wheat-growing country—until, very many years ago, the devastating rust appeared, and all the farming operations of the neighbourhood perforce changed their character. To-day it is nearly all lucerne that is grown hereabout—a fact that was well borne out by the cargo of sweet-smelling bales of hay which we spent the greater part of our stay in the old-time river port lowering into the "Archer's" holds.

Very striking is the approach to the town by water. Up above the Newcastle and Hunter River Company's wharf—as it was then—with its big galvanised-iron receiving shed, a long white bridge crosses the river, carrying the highway to the village of Hinton, a couple of miles away—and the writer has never seen it of late years without thinking of Captain Scott's famous ship, the "Discovery."

It is a far cry from Morpeth to the South West India Docks in London, but the recollection of the sight of that white bridge takes him back to a certain cold and frosty but clear winter afternoon, when he wandered through the great basins looking at the extraordinary variety of ships from all the world to be found at rest therein. Suddenly he came upon a small wooden vessel that was obviously laid up and out of commission. On her bows were painted the letters "D-I-S-C-O-V-E-R-Y." Immediately he recognised the famous Arctic and Antarctic exploring ship, and halted to inspect her closely.

A man was leaning over the side, smoking a pipe and looking lonely, and evidently anxious for conversation. He confirmed one's idea that this was, indeed, the "Discovery," and extended an invitation to come aboard. He was the ship-keeper, and informed the writer that she then belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company, and was laid up for the winter. Very hospitably, he showed me over the famous ship, and then suggested an adjournment to the galley for a pot of tea. There, for an hour or two, we talked and smoked. It came out that the writer was an Australian.

"What part of Australia?"

"Well—I'm a Hunter River native, really—but I've been—"

"The Hunter! You know the Hunter River? You know Newcastle?"

"Yes—better than I know the Commercial Road. I was born at West Maitland."

This seemed to excite his liveliest interest. He fairly gaped at me in astonishment.

"Well, you must know a little place on the river, down below Maitland, called Morpeth?"

"Oh, yes—know it well. Often been there."

"Lord, it's a narrow little world! Would you remember a big wooden bridge, by any chance, just above the town?"

I told him I'd often been across it, and he got up and grabbed my hand.

"Well, now—to think of that! Shake hands, Mister. I ran away from my ship in Newcastle, and the first job I got in the country was on that bridge, when they were building it. Come on—we'll go ashore and have a drink. Holy Moses—to think of *that*, now! It beats Creation!"

Morpeth is built upon the northern extremity of a long ridge—upon the south end of which is East Maitland—which constitutes the highest land in the immediate neighbourhood. The name by which the place was first known is curiously attractive, and one that was very commonly bestowed in the naming of localities by the pioneers of Australia all over the continent. It is one of those natural designations of which "Black Mountain," "Dry Creek," "Sandy Flat," etc., are such abounding examples throughout the Commonwealth. The first and most notable of the Green Hills was, of

course, the old settlement on the banks of the Hawkesbury, where Governor Macquarie established the town of Windsor in 1810. For a score or more of years it bore the name bestowed upon it by those who came there first, and it is always to be regretted that his autocratic Excellency ever changed it. It may have been that the first settlers in this part of the Hunter Valley—who came here about 1812—named it after the Hawkesbury settlement, but it is just as likely that the greenness of the ridges themselves was responsible for what they called it. For the first supposition, a certain resemblance, just hereabout on the banks of a noble river, to the site of Windsor, encourages such as may like a romantic story to a preference. For the second, the fact that the pioneers were usually more practical than sentimental seems to make out a case. Whichever notion may be correct—it must have been one or the other—the fact remains that, from the old Green Hills of the Hunter, the outlook must have been as delightful, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, as it was from the older Green Hills of the Hawkesbury. To-day, any comparison would be odious, and there is not much to choose between the view from the belfry of St. Matthew's Church at Windsor and that obtainable from the summit of the square tower of St. James's in Morpeth.

The town is unmistakably very old, as age counts in a new country like Australia—and it has as unmistakably seen better days. It is to-day the centre of a very rich farming district, and has a certain air of solid prosperity of its own—but it is more than obvious that long ago it did very much better than it does now. Huge stone storehouses along the river indicate a

former business activity that does not exist in these days, and this is borne out by the history of the place.

From about 1820 until the eighteen-sixties it was the port of all northern New South Wales, and pretty well all the trade of the north used to pass through it. Everything destined for Sydney—in the days when Maitland was the real capital of this part of New South Wales—had to come through here, as did all but a very inconsiderable part of the passenger traffic. Shipping on the river, before the construction of the railway along the Hunter Valley, was at least a score of times greater than it is now. For many years, as we have seen in preceding chapters, two steamship organisations competed for the trade of the Hunter, together with that of the north-western plains and New England. The “Archer,” and then the “Kindur,” were the last of the deep sea ships that came to Morpeth, and the rest of the local shipping was made up of shallow-draught vessels of the drogher type and motor-launches carrying cream-cans to the local butter factory.

Formerly the passenger steamers plying between Sydney and the Hunter invariably continued their voyage on from Newcastle to Morpeth, but they never do so now. The gradual but inexorable shoaling of the river accounts for this. The last of the larger vessels of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company to make the complete voyage was the “Namoi,” but when the “Archer” and the “Kindur” used to make it, say, a dozen years ago, it was only possible to get them up to the Morpeth wharf on the flood tide, and sailings from Sydney were timed in accordance with high-water at Newcastle, which is about three hours earlier than at Morpeth. If the quantity of cargo to be taken in

meant missing a tide, the ship concerned had to remain at the head of navigation until the next ebb tide—that is to say, if she were drawing her fully-loaded draught.

While the lucerne was coming into the “Archer’s” hold, the captain and the writer went ashore with a camera, and took a stroll about the town and across the river, securing various snapshots of the old town and its surroundings. The one with most historic interest in the couple of spools used up was that of St. James’s Church of England, which is a temple with a story. The little stone church goes back in its traditions to the earliest days of settlement.

The original grantee of the land upon which Morpeth is built was Lieutenant Edward Charles Close, of H.M. 48th Regiment of Foot, who came to New South Wales with his battalion in 1817. An extraordinary escape from death whilst on active service in the Peninsula War—so the story goes—induced him to make a vow that whenever he was in a position to do so he would build a church as a token of his gratitude to God for his escape. So, years afterwards, he fulfilled this pious resolve at the old Green Hills, and St. James’s was opened for public worship in 1833. This is the biographical notice of Lieutenant Close printed in “The Australian Encyclopaedia,” which may fittingly be quoted here as that of the principal pioneer of the district:—

“CLOSE, EDWARD CHARLES (1790-1866), born at Rangamati, near Calcutta, on 12 March, 1790, and educated at Ipswich, in Suffolk, with a view to taking Holy Orders; in 1808 abandoned the Church for the Army (ensign, 1808; lieutenant, 1809), serving in the Peninsula, and taking part in the battles of

Talavera, Busaco, Albuera, Vittoria, the Nivelles, Orthes, and Toulouse. In 1817 he came with his regiment (the 48th) to New South Wales, and in 1821 was acting engineer at Newcastle; but at the end of that year seems to have resigned his commission and settled down as a landholder at Green Hills, now the town of Morpeth; to the 2000 acres he held there he soon added another 3800, thus becoming one of the biggest landholders in the Newcastle district. The Green Hills property, lying along the ridge at the head of the Hunter navigation, was the obvious site for a township; but Darling's attempts to recover the grant without giving Close an equal area elsewhere delayed resumption until the impatient settlers had planted themselves on the low land of West Maitland, and Close's later subdivision of the Green Hills land did not attract them back. Made a magistrate in 1822, he was in 1827 involved in trouble over the shooting of aborigines on Dr. Bowman's land . . . and removed by Darling from the magistracy; he was not, however, long in disfavour, being appointed on 1 February, 1829, an original member of the newly constituted Legislative Council. From this position he retired in 1839, and lived quietly on his estates until his death on 7 May, 1866."

The "Archer" sailed for Sydney on the top of the ebb tide about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, passed out to sea round Nobby's at 7 p.m., and was at her berth in Port Jackson at 2 o'clock on the following morning.

Chapter XIII

WALLIS PLAINS

THE first inland settlement of any importance on the Hunter River was made on the level country, a few miles above the head of navigation at the Green Hills (Morpeth), which had been named after the Commandant at Newcastle, Captain James Wallis, of H.M. 48th Regiment. The river itself, however, had already been explored from the sea as far as the present site of Singleton, as had also the Williams and the Paterson.

In July, 1804, the district about the mouth of the river had a population of 95 souls, which had increased in twelve months to 138. Its principal exports, as has been mentioned, were coal and red cedar, the latter of which was found growing in great abundance along the banks of the Hunter and the Williams. Governor Macquarie visited Newcastle in 1811, and went up the river as far as its juncture with the Williams, where Raymond Terrace stands to-day. He was there again in 1818, and gave the Commandant, Captain Wallis, permission to settle a number of well-conducted convicts on the country round the site of West Maitland, which he named Wallis Plains in honour of that gentleman. Before this time it had been known as "The Camp," and was often referred to later as "Molly Morgan's Plains."

The two earliest identities of the district who have been remembered in its traditions were a man named Maloney, who had been granted 170 acres on the site of West Maitland, and Molly Morgan, who had a grant of 159 acres in his neighbourhood. An over fondness for rum eventually led, in both cases, to a loss of all their possessions, but for some time the locality was always referred to on the Lower Hunter as "Molly Morgan's."

Major Morrisset, Commandant at Newcastle in succession to Captain Wallis, made the first overland journey between Newcastle and Sydney in 1823. He reached Windsor, on the Hawkesbury, after nine days of strenuous battling through the densely timbered and very rough country lying between the two rivers. But before Morrisset made his expedition a party from the Hawkesbury led by John Howe, Chief Constable at Windsor, had crossed the ranges and reached the Hunter at a point about where the town of Singleton was afterwards established. The party consisted of John and Andrew Howe, George Loder, William Dargan, Phillip Thornley and Benjamin Singleton, after whom the town was subsequently named.

On March 17, 1820, they came down from the mountains onto open plain country which, in honour of the Irish saint, they called Patrick's Plains. A subsequent chapter deals more fully with this adventure.

In March, 1823, Allan Cunningham followed Howe's track to Patrick's Plains, and travelled about 40 miles further up the Hunter. Two years later Mr. Surveyor-General Oxley followed the same route, and made a journey to Bathurst *via* the Liverpool Plains.

Of the two Maitlands, East and West, the latter is

the older. The name is said to have been given to the place by Mr. Surveyor Maitland, who marked out the first land boundaries in the district. In 1826 there were only three residences in the neighbourhood, but the settlement must have increased in importance very rapidly, for at the end of 1829 an order was issued by the Chief Justice, Sir Francis Forbes, for the holding of a court at Maitland on the 20th of the following January. This growth of population is further borne out by the fact that it was stated in March, 1828, that every acre of land on the banks of the Hunter had been allocated, and that 10,000 head of cattle had been driven over the ranges onto the Liverpool Plains. In 1831 the first survey for a township at Maitland was made by the government, the plan of the settlement having been signed and approved by Governor Darling the year before. About 200 allotments were sold, and by this time a house for the local Commandant had been built and a guard-house erected for the accommodation of prisoners being sent down to Newcastle gaol from outlying parts of the valley.

The best way to go to the place whose name appears at the top of this chapter is by the route that was most in use when it went by such a name—that is to say, if you are going from Sydney, by way of the Tasman Sea and the Hunter River. You will not find it easy, however, to book for such a destination. A hundred years ago it would have been possible to come across someone who would have understood you when you told him whither you were bound, but nowadays almost your best plan would be to write a note to the honorary research secretary of the Royal Australian Historical

Society, asking him where to look for the locality. His reply would be, "Try West Maitland."

So you would secure a berth in one of the steamers of the Newcastle and Hunter River S.S. Company, and make the six-hour voyage to Port Hunter—on a summer night for preference, with a full moon shining—arriving there just as the old Coal River city is waking up in the morning. It might be possible for you to catch a certain small river steamer still engaged in the navigation of the Hunter, and voyage up to Morpeth through some of the most charming river scenery in Australia. If you then ascend the ridge on which the latter town and East Maitland are situated, you may look out across Wallis Plains, with the placid river winding through them, and West Maitland lying in their green spaciousness a few miles away.

The name by which these higher lands along the Lower Hunter was first known is a curiously attractive one, and one that was very common in the christening of localities by their pioneers all over Australia, as has been pointed out before. From the Green Hills, perhaps, Wallis Plains are seen at their best.

Those long, level lands—some of the richest in the State of New South Wales, if not in the Commonwealth—received their name originally, as has been mentioned, in honour of the man who was Commandant at Newcastle in the second decade of the last century, Captain James Wallis, of the 48th Regiment, who subsequently established the settlement of Port Macquarie. Wallis Creek, between East and West Maitland, also perpetuates his memory. And you may see some of the work that he began at the mouth of the Hunter in the shoreward end of the southern break-

water, connecting Nobby's (Coal Island) with the mainland. It was commenced in his day, but was not finally completed until 1857, having more than once been partly destroyed during its construction by heavy southerly gales.

Captain Wallis seems to have been one of the better sort of officials who had control of most of the country during the somewhat horrible days of "the System." Of the establishment he founded at Port Macquarie, and directed for several years, Governor Macquarie writes with enthusiasm in his despatches and his own private journal. He was an energetic, painstaking, conscientious officer, who was, according to the ideas of colonial government held in Australia at that time, possibly a little too mild in his methods of enforcing discipline. If this was really the case, however, the relaxing effects of his humane administration were very efficiently counteracted by his successor, Major Morriset, whose government in no way erred on the side of softness and leniency.

It was this gentleman who, during his term as Commandant of the district of the Lower Hunter, used to make periodical inspections of his famous barge of the main river and its tributaries, the Williams and the Paterson. The flagellator always accompanied him on these rounds, and the triangles were kept conveniently rigged in the bows of the big boat, against any possibility of a waste of time. He would call at a farm on the river bank, inquire whether any of the assigned servants stood in need of discipline, and, in his capacity as a magistrate of the Territory, would try those who were so reported to him. In the event of their offences

being proved, they only had to step down to the barge to receive the correction due to them.

These rich river flats are amongst the very best lands in all Australia, but they have to pay for their fertility by periodic inundations of the sort through which Noah carried out his justly celebrated feat of navigation. The present writer was in Maitland during the big flood of 1913—the record one was in 1893—all but thirty years ago, and can truthfully affirm that such visitations are by no means amusing interludes, confident in the fact that he will be backed in such a statement by many people who had fine views of this particular episode of super-dampness from ridgepoles and lofts, and even from the tops of trees and the roofs of floating homesteads. A wooden house is not a comfortable craft in which to make a voyage, owing principally to the fact that it steers badly and is difficult to berth successfully. There are plenty of people living on Wallis Plains to-day who would vouch from experience for the truth of this. And tree-tops, though well ventilated, are said to leak atrociously and not to be comfortable residences for others than birds.

But if the floods are bad, they have the redeeming virtue of top-dressing the lands they overwhelm with a soil that would almost “grow hair on a billiard ball.” Nowhere is there anything better for lucerne cultivation than the deep, loamy deposits of Wallis Plains. Nowhere else are there such possibilities for an intense cultivation of the sort that obtains in France and other western European countries and will surely one day be followed here. Always, of course, will remain the floods; but, even in spite of this very great drawback, it is safe to say that this fertile countryside will have an

agricultural future of this description that those who come after the present generation—though, maybe possibly, not until the one after that—will adequately realise. It may be an unwelcome thing to say to the Lower Hunter farmer—but he hasn't even yet, after a good deal more than a century of possession, altogether realised the manifold possibilities of his rich and bounteous heritage.

Possibly because he is a native of them, the author is a little prejudiced in favour of the Hunter River flats as they exist on Wallis Plains, but whether that be so or not hardly matters. By their very aspect they advertise themselves in a way that is unmistakable. If you have eyes to see, you need only go and look at them in order to realise what they are. If it be desired to show to any foreign visitor something worth looking at whilst he is in New South Wales, he might well be taken up the Hunter River to Wallis Plains.

Two generations ago the people of Wallis Plains were nothing if not a community of agriculturists. West Maitland was a somewhat sleepy rural centre almost of the sort that you might have found contemporaneously in Kent or Devonshire. In between floods, the people of the surrounding countryside took life placidly, and hardly concerned themselves much with what took place beyond Singleton, up above, and Newcastle down below, along the quiet river winding to the sea through these rich, green fields. The town had an aspect of having seen better days—as it certainly had, when the north and north-west were in process of development and it was the social, commercial and political capital of all the vast territory stretching to the Queensland border. There was almost an air of

decay about it, however, fifty or sixty years ago, and nobody who knows it would have been very much surprised had High Street slipped into the encroaching river, as it more than once very nearly did in flood-time, and the town been abandoned to the ploughshare and the mowing-machine. It was a place of Past Glories.

But now all that is changed. There is still an agricultural population—but there is another sort as well. The opening up of the South Maitland collieries has brought a new class of human being into the district, a new industry, and a new life. You could not fire a rifle down High Street to-day at noon-tide without shooting somebody, as you might sometimes have done in those old days. High Street at the present time is a busy place of fine shops and imposing business premises—though much of the old-time lingers about it, if you know where to look. But there is no doubt that the neighbouring coalfields and the race of beings that belongs to them have changed the nature of the place utterly and completely.

In a little volume of verses printed privately half a century ago—the author was a relative of the writer of this book—is a poetical effusion which is a sort of curse bestowed upon the place by a young man on his departure from the old capital of the Lower Hunter, which, since it is entirely opposed to every sentiment of the present scribe regarding the town, he would like to insert here. It is entitled “Farewell to Maitland,” and originally appeared in a Hunter River newspaper some time in the early eighteen-sixties. Here it is in all its malevolence, but whether it truly represents its perpetrator’s ideas one has never been quite certain.

“Farewell at last, thou land of dust,
None live in thee but those who must;
When eddying clouds around me rise,
With close-shut mouth and blinking eyes,
I pray to God that I may soon
Be far from Maitland’s dread simoon.

“Ah! brave indeed they need to be,
Who through all seasons live in thee—
Who dare thy summer’s scorching heat,
Nor from thy wintry floods retreat,
But keep their places steadfastly,
When all thy land is changed to sea.

“When Hunter’s angry waters meet,
And rivers rush down every street,
When through each lane the boatman steers,
How sweet to dream of gondoliers—
To think that we in Venice rest,
By soft Italian breezes blest.

“And when at length the turbid flood
Retiring, leaves us all its mud,
What pleasant odours greet the nose
Who down each muddy by-way goes,
And ventures o’er thy hardening crust—
Exhaustless magazine of dust.

“Farewell, ye houses, low and damp;
Farewell, thou far-surrounding swamp,
Where pestilential vapours rise,
And all that’s good or lovely dies.
Oh, grant I ne’er behold again,
A town so cursed of gods and men.”

There is a view in West Maitland that the writer never fails to look at when he goes there. If you stand on the footway on the lower side of the Belmore Bridge and gaze down stream, you cannot fail to be charmed with the sweeping curve of the river, round which the backs of the houses along High Street seem to perch precariously—and a square church tower gives an old world note to the scene. No Australian film-producer need go further afield than the Belmore Bridge at West Maitland to get a setting for an old English market-town, whence the hero of the story emigrated to Australia. And from the bridge the ordinary Australian, who is not in the moving-picture business, will get his best impression of the old-time "county town" of Wallis Plains. It is one that he will never wish to forget.

Chapter XIV

PORT STEPHENS

ALTHOUGH, strictly speaking, Port Stephens lies outside the scope of a book with the title borne by this volume, it is so close to Newcastle, and is destined one day in the future to play so important a part in the development of New South Wales, that it seems necessary to say something about it here before going further up the Hunter Valley. The Newcastle Packets no longer trade there, but 16 years ago the writer visited the great port, 25 miles north of the mouth of the Hunter, in one of the small steamers—the “Allyn River”—which the Newcastle and Hunter River S.S. Company used to run there regularly. The following account of his voyage was published at the time in a Sydney newspaper, and he feels that he cannot do better than reproduce it here. It gives as adequate a description of the port and its story as he could write now, though it is to be remembered that the article was published in 1926. However, little change has taken place in the conditions existing at that time.

“The little ship is a cargo carrier, broad of beam and shallow of draught, and has no accommodation for passengers, but, knowing the Company and the captain, the writer was given a passage and found a bed on the settee in the latter’s cabin.

"A few minutes before midnight the captain came aboard, and in the first hour of the new day we slipped out of the Hunter River, swung round the northern breakwater, and headed nor'-eastward, into the teeth of a stiff breeze, towards Port Stephens, leaving the flashing light on Nobby's behind us. Twenty-five miles or so we had to roll across Stockton Bight, past Anna Bay and Morna Point, before we should have another lighthouse on our beam, and alter our course to enter the big harbour where Newcastle might, with advantage, have been placed originally.

"The strong head wind had checked our passage across the tumbling, moonlit waters of the Bight, and by the time we were off the steep basaltic face of Toomeree, Port Stephens's south head, the dawn was lightening the sky to seaward with all the promise of a glorious day. As we rolled round on to a westerly course to enter the harbour, the sun rose up out of the wide green waters behind, and we opened up the splendid beauties of Port Stephens under conditions that were perfect for their appreciation.

"The yellow scarp of Toomeree, split from summit to base by a deep chasm into which the swells heave and surge interminably, became a buttress of shining gold; the dark green crest of Yacaaba—the north head—surmounted similar golden walls, with a line of pink foam at their foundations, and the wide waters of the great bay spread west and nor'-west before us to distant wooded coastlines of gleaming beaches, backed by dark forest-clad hills, with far-off blue ranges behind them, shining and glowing in the light of the new morning like the inside of mother-o'-pearl.

"On our port side, when we had rounded Toomeree,

the white beach of Shoal Bay curved to Nelson's Head, on whose summit stands the Inner Light, and beyond which the little settlement of Nelson's Bay—hotel, post-office, store and scattered handful of houses—is almost all that over a century of occupation by the white man has done for Port Stephens. Nowhere else can there be such a glaring instance of opportunities neglected as is presented by the wild and lonely aspect of this magnificent harbour in the present year of grace.

“Having landed an extraordinary variety of cargo on the wharf at Nelson's Bay, we steam westward up the harbour, *en route* for Pindimar—which pleasant name is pronounced with the accent on the second syllable. A long shoal—the Manton Bank—extends up the northern side of the bay, and it is necessary to get round this before we turn northward. Pindimar, or Duck Hole, as it is referred to locally, lies opposite the navigable mouth of the Myall River, running into Port Stephens from the Myall Lakes to the north. The other branch enters the bay through a series of shoals, far over to the eastward.

“The scenery of Port Stephens is incomparable, and even the most truculantly boastful ‘booster’ of Port Jackson, having once seen the place, cannot but admit that in this splendid haven there exists a worthy rival to Our Beautiful Harbour. It has always seemed to the writer that, in their natural state, any comparison of the beauties of the two big inlets must result in favour of Port Stephens. Sydney Harbour has been immensely improved in appearance by the growth of the city about its shores—you need only look at Broken Bay, which to-day gives us a fair example of the

original Port Jackson scenery, to realise this. The low ridges of Hawkesbury sandstone, monotonously uniform in height and contour, of the two big bays down the coast to the southward, cannot be compared to the tall hills that surround Port Stephens in ever-varying shape and form, and the tall blue ranges behind them provide a background that is missing in Broken Bay and Port Jackson. Of course, it can never be seriously contended that Port Stephens is as good a harbour as Port Jackson—so far as universal deep water and navigability are concerned—but for good looks, at any rate, it is easily its equal and possibly its superior.

"Pindimar consists of an ice-factory, once a State fish depot, which supplies the local fishermen with ice for the packing and preservation of their catches on the voyage to Newcastle and Sydney, a store, a few little houses, many square miles of eucalyptus forest, and a long jetty. Here the river steamer meets the "Allyn River," and transfers from her capacious hold and broad deck a miscellaneous cargo, ranging between furniture, kegs of ice-cream, beer, groceries and machinery for transport to Bullahdelah and the scanty settlements about the coasts of the Myall Lakes. And it is here that you first come in contact with the oyster culture that is the principal means of subsistence, apart from timber-getting, for the handful of inhabitants of this sparsely populated province.

"On the whole, oyster-farming is nowadays the principal industry of Port Stephens. Along the extensive coastline of the bay and its many branches—including the mouths of the Myall and Karuah Rivers—there are over 500 miles of oyster leases. Almost

every foot of frontage—even round the mangrove islands—has been taken up.

“People who do not know better are very liable to regard oyster-culture as an easy, lazy, carefree and profitable method of making a living—just as very many so regard poultry-farming. But there could not be any greater mistake. Teaching *ostrea cuculata* how to domesticate himself in certain places, how to behave when there, and how to keep his health and grow fat and palatable to the ogres who eat him alive, and how to return a reasonable profit to his exploiters, is almost as complicated a job as the breeding of stud sheep. He is a good fellow, *ostrea cuculata*, but he has succeeded in bankrupting more than one of his cultivators who have made the mistake of not taking him sufficiently seriously.

“In continuation of our voyage up Port Stephens and the Karuah River to the head of navigation in that picturesque stream, our course lies more or less along the northern coast of the great bay. The big inlet is really two immense basins connected by a narrow passage, in the midst of which lies the beautiful tree-clad gem of little Middle Island, between Soldiers’ Point and the high hills of the north side. The point got its name from the fact that in the old days a detachment of the Newcastle military garrison was stationed there to prevent runaway convicts from the penal settlement at Port Macquarie making their escape towards the populated centres to the southward. The outer basin is fed by the Myall River, and the larger, inner one by the Karuah and by Telligherry Creek, which enters it on the western side of Soldiers’

Point. The mouth of the Karuah is the head of the harbour proper.

"It is usual to pass Middle Island by the southern passage, but to-day we are taking the Inner Channel, which runs close inshore to Carrington, the site of the Australian Agricultural Company's first settlement on Port Stephens, so we go by the northern. We pass close by the mouth of the North Arm, and then make a more or less direct run across to Sawyers' Point, where the township of Karuah is situated, and the road from Raymond Terrace, at the junction of the Hunter and Williams Rivers, that leads to Tea Gardens, crosses the river by a punt. We steam up the Karuah for about ten miles to Booral Wharf, where lies the village of Allworth, the port of Booral, situated four or five miles away. Then back to Sawyers' Point, to tie up there for the night and all day Sunday, sailing on our return voyage to Newcastle, by way of Pindimar and Nelson's Bay, at 6 o'clock on Monday morning. It will be sufficient to say here that no quarter-mile of the voyage is without interest and beauty—what space remains of this chapter must be given to the story of Port Stephens.

"The first attempt at settlement on the big harbour was made nearly 120 years ago, during the reign of Major Morrisset at Newcastle. The penal colony at Port Macquarie had been established during the latter years of Governor Macquarie's administration of the Government of New South Wales, and, to prevent runaway convicts from that place making back towards Newcastle and Sydney, the guard of soldiers mentioned above had been placed at Soldiers' Point. A few years later, the Australian Agricultural Company, formed

in London in 1824, took up its immense land grant of one million acres between Port Stephens and the Manning River, and in 1826 established its headquarters, and disembarked its stock and its servants, over at Carrington, on the north-western side of the inner basin, not far from the mouth of the Karuah River. Here, for a while, was great activity—until the Company discovered that it had been ill-advised in putting all its eggs into one basket, and that the existence of a fine port wherefrom to ship its produce did not altogether compensate for inferior country for stock-raising, such as the land in the vicinity of Port Stephens proved to be.

“So it made its famous exchange of much of its infertile tract of mountain, ravine and forest for the rich pastures of Warrah and Goonoo Goonoo, out on the Liverpool Plains. Carrington faded away, and never since has any serious attempt been made to turn Port Stephens to its best account. For 120 years its immense forests have been exploited for timber, and all the valuable red-cedar which used to abound in the ranges has been cut out—but to-day the shores of the great harbour remain much the same in aspect as when Mr. Superintendent Dawson set out, and failed, to make a fortune for the English shareholders of the A.A. Company. The fortune has been made since from the coal-beds of Newcastle and the grasses of the rich plains beyond the Dividing Range—the Port Stephens venture contributed little to it but a negative or minus quantity. Civilisation here made a bad start, but that it will before long make a good one is quite certain and inevitable.

“The first of the Company’s settlers, with valuable

stock, arrived in Sydney, in the ships 'York' and 'Brothers,' at the end of 1825, and by May, 1826, a substantial settlement had been formed at Carrington, under Mr. Robert Dawson, the first local Superintendent—a gentleman of no 'colonial experience' whatsoever, to whom too much responsibility was left, and who seems to have been, in many respects, quite unfitted for his position. 'At any rate,' writes Mr. Jesse Gregson, General-Superintendent of the Company from 1875 to 1895, in his valuable work, 'The Australian Agricultural Company, 1824-1875' (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, Ltd.), 'this wealthy corporation, bringing advantage to a community whose very existence depended on the existence of capital, was pitchforked into a district wholly untried, and quite different in soil and vegetation from any which had been tried; and its settlement there was so far determined upon that by October, 1826, 1000 head of cattle and 2000 sheep had been purchased and brought to Port Stephens, and the establishment there had grown to 250 souls.'

"One cannot do better here than to quote from Mr. Gregson's book as to the condition of the settlement about six or eight years later, during the administration of Captain Sir Edward Parry, R.N., the famous Arctic explorer, who had succeeded Mr. Dawson and Mr. James Ebsworth as the Company's Commissioner in New South Wales. It gives a picture of Old Port Stephens, and a description of the working of the establishment, that cannot be improved. The book is a most fascinating record of the many failures and ultimate success of a great corporation, which has, on the whole, done notable things for Australian civilisa-

tion. Tahlee House still stands at Carrington, the property of the descendants of the late Hon. R. H. D. White.

“‘Tahlee House,’ he says, ‘was then the residence of the Commissioner. It was prettily situated on rising ground, overlooking the harbour, near the mouth of the Karuah River, surrounded by a garden which has been described to me as one of the best in the district. Less than half a mile east of it a township named Carrington had been laid out on flat ground near the water’s edge. Here were the storehouses, the residences of the officials, the cottages of the men and of the military guard. It was the place of business, the headquarters of the establishment. In the other direction, on the left bank of the Karuah, was No. 1 farm; and further on another farm called Booral had been formed on a rather extensive flat bordering the river. At these two farms small parties of prisoners and the overseers under whom they worked were living. Four miles farther on, a considerable area of undulating land at the confluence of Mill Creek had been cleared and cultivated, employing many labourers. Already the residence of one of the superintendents, a township had been laid out here called Stroud, which eventually became one of the most important and populous of the Company’s settlements, and subsequently the chief place of business of the district and the seat of the Court of Petty Sessions. Two miles beyond Stroud, on the Karuah, was Telligherry, the residence of the superintendent of stock, overlooking a beautiful reach of the river; and nearby was the woolshed. Sheep stations had been formed in Mr. Dawson’s time in various places on the Karuah River and the Mill Creek,

to a distance of twelve miles from Stroud, and had since been pushed on, till the valleys of the Avon and Gloucester Rivers had also become sheep runs, where, by 1834, most of the flocks appear to have been stationed. In those days flocks of sheep averaged from 300 to 500 in number. Two flocks were usually stationed at one place, where was the hut of the shepherds, and a yard for each flock to camp in at night. Each flock had two shepherds with it by day, and, on returning to the yard, was throughout the night, in charge of a watchman, whose duty it was to see that the sheep were not attacked by native dogs. There were, therefore, six men at each station, generally, if not invariably, assigned prisoners, and, therefore, not costing much for wages. This, it must be understood, was then the general practice in the colony, which the Company's officials had adopted at their first landing, and had since followed. In an elaborate paper prepared by Mr. Henry Dangar in 1832, for submission to the court of directors, he states the number of people engaged in looking after the sheep, then nearly 25,000, was no fewer than 121, besides three superintendents; and he enumerates them as follows:—Thirteen free overseers, three prisoner overseers, one chief overseer, two free shepherds, and 102 prisoner shepherds. The cost of this part of the establishment he estimates at £3,160 per annum, exclusive of shearing expenses.'

"The 'General Order Book' of the Company about this time, from which Mr. Gregson quotes extensively in order to show the extraordinary details which had to be attended to by the Commissioner, is a most valuable historical document. There is not room here for much of it, but General Order No. 30 is very

typical. It is under date of August 5, 1830, and reads as follows:—

“‘As the stopping of the tobacco from the prisoners who slept at the camp on the night of the 18th ult. has not led to the conviction of the offenders, it is my direction that the tobacco of all the prisoners who were at Carrington, the tan-pits, and the brickfield on that night, including also Page and Donelly, the Tahlee gardeners, and Denis Reardon, be stopped from this time.

“‘Memorandum to Mr. Wetherman.—Issue and send up to Stroud by the first opportunity for Matthew Delany, at Lawler’s station, one blanket, two shirts, three-quarter pound tobacco, in lieu of the same articles stolen by the blacks when he was speared.

“‘Order.—Simon Kemp is to explain how it has happened that the horse placed in his charge has died.

“‘Mr. Barton is not to pay the last quarter’s salary to Simon Kemp, till he has given me a satisfactory explanation as to this serious loss to the Company.’

“‘The first part of the above proclamation has a sequel later in the month. Mr. Wetherman, it may be explained, was the storekeeper.

“‘August 24. General Order No. 36.—As the stopping of the tobacco from the prisoners at Carrington and its neighbourhood has not led to the conviction of the robbers of Daniel Joby’s property on the 18th ult., it is my direction that the tea be also stopped from all the prisoners mentioned in my order of the 5th inst.

“‘Mr. Wetherman will remind me every other Friday to stop some other allowance till the prisoners are reduced to the Government ration, or till the offenders are all brought to justice.’

"It is quite evident that Sir Edward Parry, despite his universal popularity, and the high character for benevolence which he enjoyed in the colony, was not a man with whom it was very safe to trifle. Always, he was the naval captain—even in dealing with delinquent convict shepherds."

Chapter XV

PATRICK'S PLAINS

THE district of the Lower Hunter, of which the town of Singleton is the centre, was discovered on March 17, 1820, by a party led by John Howe, the Chief Constable of Windsor, on the Hawkesbury River, but it is certain that Howe's party were not the first white men to set foot in that countryside.

When Lieutenant Grant, R.N., carried Colonel Paterson's expedition to the mouth of the Hunter in 1801, aboard the "Lady Nelson," as has been related in an earlier chapter, several of the party—including Grant, Paterson, Surgeon Harris and Ensign Barrallier—went up the river in boats. After exploring the two tributary streams of the Williams and the Paterson for comparatively short distances, they followed up the main river—though Barrallier credited the Williams with being that in his map—past the present position of Maitland to a point somewhere about the site of the town of Singleton. However, it was not until 17 years later that any attempt was made to reach the Lower Hunter country above Wallis Plains overland from the Hawkesbury. Soon after the establishment of the settlement at the mouth of the river in 1804, several runaway convicts made their way across the

intervening ranges to the Hawkesbury, but it was a long time before a passage was effected in the opposite direction. In 1818 Benjamin Singleton and four others set out to examine the country north and north-west of Windsor, and although they failed to reach the Hunter, they got into touch with aborigines who gave them a good deal of information about it.

Singleton left the Hawkesbury on April 25, 1818, and pushed on until May 6. He kept a journal of his expedition—a quaintly puzzling bit of literature it is—and the following extract refers to the end of his journey, and carries the date “Wednesday, 6th.” Singleton was a better pioneer than a scholar, as this part of his literary remains sufficiently attests.

“Arose the morning,” he says, “and shaped our course on the same Hill about 10 o’clock fell in with upwards of two hundred natives who Had Never Seen a White Man Before except one the name of Mawby who could speak a little English the Whole Being clothed with Skins and Furnished with a Great Quantity of Spears through the Means of the Native we had with us we got Mawby an four More to Advance close to us the Native we had with us enquire if we could go to the Westward he informed us it was impossible as it was very rocky an no water to be got that way they asked us our Business we told them we wanted to go to Bathurst or to find good land they pointed to the N. Eastward saying we go there in two Days where there was a Large river so large they could not swim over it saying they could not Drink it we suppose by that means it was salt we told the Native to ask them which way it run they said Both ways by that Means we suppose the tide must

rise and flow Pointing to the Westward saying it run along that way with a large flat of land by the side of it we suppose it might be very possible the river run from the Plains supposing it to empty itself into Port Stephens although they said it was only two Days further we feared to go upon account if we went they would still go with us we was afraid they would betray us upon account of the Provisions being only 5 in number and a Native who was a very Weak member to fight he was more in dread than Ourselves an anxious to return we supposed ourselves to be 120 miles from Windsor .N 30 W. returned the same way we went We arrived Home at the Water Mill may 14th."

If old Ben Singleton's style is puzzling, it is at least quite original. The Rev. "Bobby" Knopwood's MS. journal is the only Australian historical document the writer is acquainted with that can possibly rival it.

Although Singleton's diary in the original calls for somewhat exhausting study, it was interesting enough to Governor Macquarie, who read it at Windsor ten days after the explorers' return, to induce him to encourage another expedition along Singleton's route. So next year he gave instructions to John Howe to lead a carefully selected party of pioneers in search of a practicable track across the ranges to the good country in the valley of the Lower Hunter. Only a few absconding convicts had hitherto been into the rough and forbidding territory lying between the two rivers, and their experiences, of course, were not available.

Howe and his expedition left Windsor on October 24, 1819, and, after some strenuous experiences in the

ranges, reached the Hunter River on the 5th of November. On the 17th, after his return home, Howe reported to the Governor as follows:—

“Windsor,

“November 17, 1819.

“I take the liberty to inform your Excellency that I returned to Windsor on Sunday night last, November 14, after an absence of twenty-two days in the interior to the north-north-west; that after travelling through a diversity of country we, on the thirteenth day from Windsor, fell in with a fine tract of land for cultivation and grazing which appears to be very extensive. It is situated on the banks of a fine fresh water river (the Hunter River). We made the river about 2 o’clock in the afternoon. . . .

“I have enclosed for your Excellency’s perusal my track out, which, I trust, will be found as correct as could be taken by means of a pocket compass and the distance by my watch.

“I have the honour, etc.,

“JOHN HOWE.”

Howe was accompanied by six others, including a local aboriginal. The following “list of persons who accompanied Mr. Howe” is preserved in the office of the Chief Secretary of New South Wales at Sydney, and is in Macquarie’s own unmistakable handwriting. The memorandum reads as follows:—

- | | |
|------------------------|----------|
| “1—George Loder, junr. | Free. |
| “2—John Milward. | do. |
| “3—John Eggleton. | Convict. |
| “4—Charles Berry. | do. |

"5—Nicholas Connelly. do.

"6—Miles, native guide; and another native who left the party the second day after it marched from Windsor.

"There were two horses, and each man had a gun and three weeks' provisions.

"(Signed) L.M.,

"Parramatta, November 25, 1819."

Howe kept voluminous notes of his distances, directions, and impressions of the country he passed through in diary form, but his account of the whole journey is too long for full quotation here, so we will only glance at his journal of the last couple of days before reaching his furthest point on the right bank of the Hunter, a mile or two down the stream from Jerry's Plains.

"Friday, November 5. Breakfasted and got ready for travelling. North to N.N.E. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. N.E. $\frac{1}{8}$ mile to pass a gully. North $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Went down a gully to make the creek, which we left yesterday afternoon (?), and with much difficulty obtained it. N.N.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Cross the creek, where we found a fine valley and thinly timbered about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile over it, but widening as we got down. W.N.W. $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Valley nearly a mile over and fine ground. I think it equal to Richmond, but not one-half the timber. N.N.W. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. North $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The valley not so wide as before, the mountain coming closer in one place. N.E. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. North $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles to a fine fresh water river (the Hunter). The last two hours through a fine country thinly timbered, and for the last hour

many acres without a tree on it. One spot, I think, exceeds 50 acres with not 20 trees on it, and very fine ground. It is evidently flooded, it having left the rubbish where the bushes were about breast high, but there is sufficient high land for stock and buildings. It is the finest sheep land I have seen since I left England. The tide makes in the river, though it does not appear to flow as high as where we made it. Resolved to follow it down till to-morrow night, if not longer. Stop to dinner. Caught a few perch. A great number in the river. The land on both sides very fine, and a great part may be cultivated without felling a tree. Even the high land is well clothed with grass and lightly timbered, though mostly thicker than the low ground. The grass on the low ground equals a meadow in England, and will throw as good a swath, and is like that native grass which is found where old stockyards have been. In the afternoon, though much fatigued, we took our course down the river. E.S.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. N.N.E. $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. At the bottom of the reach a large bank or beach of gravel, pebbles, and sand. The river widens to near the width of the Hawkesbury at Windsor, and is very deep. North 1 mile. A rock on the east side of the river and high land, nearly a mile, sloping to the river. Back ground very fine and little timber, only a few trees to an acre, and some patches without. Opposite side of the river, land more level and what timber is on it is of no object. It may be said to be clear. The high land appears to be $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile back, and that very little timber on it, and the grass very green. As we get lower down the river appears to have a fall, so that what we took to be high water mark was only the height of a fresh that we soon found

to be in it, for in this reach we found it had fallen about three or four feet from a day or two before, and after you leave the fall the river gets contracted by a large, pebbly, sandy and gravelly beach in many places to about four rods, with a rapid descent. . . . The river widens to about the width of the river at Windsor, but it has sand shoals in it. Stop for the night, and before we could unload the horses we were surprised by a strange native who, before I could get the one we had, and knew their tongue, to speak to him, disappeared, and with all our searching we could not find him. Our natives were much alarmed, and notwithstanding all I could say, or do, would have shot the poor creature had they found him. About half an hour afterwards we saw five cross the river about half a mile below, and come nearly opposite us to watch us, and left about nightfall. Our natives threatened to leave, and I detained them till morning, relying on Miles, but even he, poor fellow, was much alarmed. We kept a strict watch, and after getting an early breakfast, started.

"Saturday, November 6. S.E. 1 mile. Another fall over a pebbly ford, came across the tracks of the natives which we suppose to be the five seen the night before, and the native will proceed no further down the river: we agreed to go the next reach, and then cross the back of the country to our entrance into Coomery Roy, the land increasing and the river widening. The land does not appear to be high flooded; the highest place I saw did not exceed twelve feet, and that on low land. The high land, now about one mile back, gradually sloping to the low land and the reaches of the river, as they open, appear on the banks as clear farms. I

regret very much we could not go further down the river, but being very poorly in health, consider it more prudent to cross the land backwards, as by that means we shall see more of the country generally. E.S.E. about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, and the appears to run north."

It was in the following year, 1820, that the district received the name of "Patrick's Plains," though originally the title was prefixed with the "Saint." John Howe set out from the Hawkesbury the following March to try and amplify his discoveries of the previous November, and following for the most part his former route, reached a position, on March 17, 1820, somewhere close to the location of the present Whittingham railway-station. In honour of the day of his arrival in this promised land, Howe called the country surrounding him "Saint Patrick's Plains," and although the "Saint" went out of use very many years ago, the name is still that of the local government shire which includes the rich territory Howe went and discovered at the behest of Governor Macquarie.

The present town of Singleton derives its name from the Benjamin Singleton referred to above. Several members of Howe's party were given grants of land in the district as a reward for their exertions in opening it up. Howe got 700 acres (Redbourneberry) and Singleton two grants of 400 and 200 acres.

It seems, however, that other grants of land were made earlier than that given to Singleton, since two holdings, "McDougall's Farm" and "Brown's Farm," are mentioned in the wording of his grant. It is likely enough that he was in possession of his land before the others got theirs, his grant being surveyed later than the actual time of his taking possession. Of other

early grants in the neighbourhood, there are records of John Brown having received 600 acres (Macquarie Place); James Cobb, 600 acres; and Henry Dangar, 700 acres (Neotsfield). Singleton lived until May 3, 1853.

Not a great deal is to be found in the Historical Records concerning John Howe, the pioneer of Patrick's Plains. There was a Francis Howe who was a private in the New South Wales Corps, and received a grant of 25 acres on the Hawkesbury, and this man may have been John Howe's father—though there is no positive proof that he was.

On April 18, 1808, John Howe and other Hawkesbury settlers signed a petition to Lieut.-Colonel Paterson, asking him to take over the government of New South Wales. He also signed the settlers' memorial to the deposed Governor, Captain Bligh, in 1809. On December 29, 1810, John Howe was appointed auctioneer at Windsor in place of the lately-deceased Andrew Thompson.

In the Directory of 1833 it is announced that John Howe is auctioneer at Windsor, and also coroner. It is stated elsewhere, on the authority of Mrs. Mary Araluen Baldwin, daughter of Charles Harpur, the poet, that John Howe had the following family:—

John Howe, died unmarried.

Frances Howe, married James Doyle.

Kate Howe, married Andrew Doyle.

Elizabeth Howe, married George Dight.

Emma Howe, married John Dight.

Both Doyle and Dight are among the pioneer names of the Hunter Valley, and many representatives of the families are still living there and in Sydney.

Chapter XVI

VIN DU PAYS

ALTHOUGH the natural development of the Hunter Valley followed along the usual Australian pioneering lines—the breeding of stock, accompanied by some amount of agriculture complementary to such pursuits—it must not be overlooked that wine-growing played an important part in it. In the past and the present, the culture of the grape-vine may be counted as a notable, if subsidiary, factor in the Valley's progress. And to get Hunter River grape-culture into its rightful perspective, it is necessary to glance briefly at that of the rest of the colony. Viticulture even yet does not seem to have reached the stage of development that might have been expected in such a country, with such a soil and climate, as Australia, but it has nevertheless an important place in the story of the growth of the Commonwealth. The Hunter River Valley contains some of the oldest wine-growing undertakings in the country.

Grape-vines came to Australia from the Cape of Good Hope in the First Fleet, and were planted on the subsequent site of Sydney's Botanic Gardens behind Farm Cove. They were not a success at Port Jackson, but did better at Parramatta, and in 1791 Governor

Hunter reported to the home authorities that there were eight acres under vines.

In 1800 George Suttor, and in 1817 John Macarthur, brought out European stocks and established vineyards as commercial undertakings. In 1824 the Australian Agricultural Company included vine-growing amongst the objects for which it was constituted, though it does not seem to have troubled itself at any time over the production of wine.

But the most important introduction of stocks was made in 1831-32 by James Busby, who imported over 1100 varieties from the best French and Spanish vineyards. About the same time James King, of Irrawang, who subsequently richly endowed the University of Sydney with one of its most valuable scholarships, was growing vines from Spain and France on the Williams River, not far from its junction with the Hunter. He also experimented with some from the valley of the Rhine, but not with much success. In 1938 Jules Joubert brought into the country cuttings from the Medoc district of France, and a year later H. J. Lindeman founded the famous Cawarra vineyard on the Paterson River.

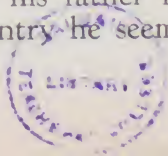
Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, New South Wales was the principal wine-growing province, and three of its pioneer vineyards are still in production—Kirkton, near Singleton, dating from 1830; Dalwood, close to Maitland, established about the same time; and Bukulla in New England. With the development of viticulture in other parts of Australia we are hardly concerned here, and will confine ourselves to the Hunter Valley.

A small quantity of very inferior wine was made

near Sydney in 1803-4, and Governor King reported that the industry was unlikely to be a profitable one. His prediction was falsified, however, a score of years later, when Gregory Blaxland succeeded in making good wine at Brush Farm, on the Parramatta River, from South African vines, and was awarded medals for his efforts by the Royal Society of Arts in England. And presently Hunter River wines, made by James King at Irrawang, secured European recognition. This was possibly the first overseas success of any wine grown in the Hunter Valley.

Captain John Macarthur, founder of wool-growing in Australia, seems to have been also a pioneer of wine-making in this country. Records of his early activities are scarce, probably for the reason that he was away from New South Wales between 1809 and 1817, but he was apparently the first settler to employ experienced wine dressers, and during his eight years' absence from the colony he made a study of wine-making in Europe. On his return to New South Wales he planted several acres of vines at Camden Park, and afterwards on the bank of the Nepean River, with such good results that in ten years' time he was producing somewhere about 20,000 gallons of wine annually.

But for a Hunter River pioneer of viticulture we must turn to James Busby. He was the second son of John Busby, the civil engineer responsible for Sydney's first water supply, conveyed to the town by "Busby's Bore" from the swamps in the area now occupied by the Centennial Park to the south-east of the city. He was born in Scotland in 1800, and arrived in New South Wales with his father in 1824. Even before coming to this country he seems to have envisaged a



wine-growing future for Australia, since, as a preliminary to his setting out for the antipodes, he made a tour of the Bordeaux district, with the intention of finding out what could be done with regard to viticulture in Australia.

Soon after he arrived in Sydney, Governor Brisbane granted him 2000 acres on the Hunter River, which he named "Kirkton," after his birthplace. In 1825 he entered the civil service, and was appointed Superintendent of the Male Orphan School at Cabramatta, where he planted a vineyard which in four years was producing good wine of the burgundy type.

In the first year of his occupation of this position he published a manual, in collaboration with his father, called "The Culture of the Vine and the Art of Making Wine," in which he suggested that every settler should grow wine for the use of his family and the sale of what was left over. It is interesting to note that he estimated a man could trench and prepare one acre a year, and that with an annual cost of £8 until the vines began to bear, the total cost per acre would be £48.

In 1830 he handed over the grant of Kirkton on the Hunter to the care of his father, and went to Europe expressly to study the vineyards of France and Spain. On his return two years later he planted at Kirkton 365 varieties of wine and table grapes. But his career in Australia was only a short one, for in 1833 he took up an administrative post in New Zealand. His father, John Busby, went to live at Kirkton in 1837, and died there, at the age of 92, twenty years afterwards.

When cuttings from the vines James Busby planted at Kirkton became available, viticulture in New South Wales received a stimulus. It was in 1832 that James



“Coonabara”

[See Page 78]



“City of Brisbane,” afterwards “Sydney”

King planted his vineyard at Irrawang, near Raymond Terrace, and in 1843 Dr. Lindeman established one at Cawarra, on the Paterson, the wines from which made a great name for themselves. John Wyndham planted his vineyard at Dalwood in 1846, and after that came the Porphyry vineyard, near Seaham, on the Williams River, planted by the Carmichael brothers.

It soon became established that the large area watered by the Hunter River and its tributary streams contained all sorts of soils most admirably adapted for viticulture, and that the climate and rainfall of the Valley were all that could be desired by wine-growers for its successful carrying on. From the Hunter wine-growing became widespread throughout all parts of Australia, though this means rather that the Valley is the original home of commercial viticulture in the Commonwealth than that subsequent effort in such a direction, derived exclusively from its flats and slopes.

About the middle of 1914 Kirkton vineyard in the Patrick Plains district was sold, and the following reference to the transfer of this historic property appeared in "The Sydney Morning Herald" of July 12 in that year.

"The recent purchase of the Kirkton vineyard, in the Hunter Valley district, by Lindeman, Ltd., centres interest for the moment in one of the historic spots in this State, and recalls the work of pioneer hands and the fruitful legacy which they left for later generations to profit by. Kirkton is not only the oldest vineyard in New South Wales, but the home of the parent stock from which spread vineyards of the Hunter, and from stage to stage all over the mother State. It was here that the late Mr. James Busby, in the year 1830,

planted out over 350 varieties of grape vines, which he imported from France and the Rhine provinces, with the idea of testing the soil and climate of this country for their successful cultivation. And from the picked varieties, which both soil and climate abundantly developed, the whole of the vineyards in the district were planted. For over 84 years the Kirkton vineyard has survived the effects of time and change, and to-day there are still some of the original stock bearing as well as ever they did over three-quarters of a century ago. Curiously enough, the property remained in the possession of the one family until the present change, the effect of which will be to add another 200 acres of vines this year in adjoining land secured by Lindeman, Ltd., for the purpose. It is noteworthy that in all these years the Kirkton vineyard was never once attacked by the diseases which have ravaged and often destroyed other properties. The sandy nature of the soil in which the pioneers rooted the mother stock has always happily secured them from phylloxera. It may be mentioned that this is the fourth vineyard property acquired by Lindeman, Ltd., along the Hunter Valley within the last four years. The firm has centres on the Paterson River and along the Murray Valley round Corowa."

As James Busby was the pioneer viticulturist of the Hunter—possibly in seniority, certainly in achievement—a few words here about his later career will not be out of place.

In 1837 Lord Goderich, then Colonial Secretary, appointed him British Resident in New Zealand, and on May 16, 1837, he landed in the Bay of Islands to take up his work. There he began his duties as

Administrator of the islands, and performed them faithfully and well until the end of the decade. And then singular ill-fortune attended him for the rest of his life, and if ever a man was badly treated by Fate, this pioneer of Australian wine and New Zealand civil government might well claim that he was.

In 1839 the New South Wales authorities protested to the Colonial Office that the payment of Busby's salary wasn't really their affair, since they got nothing out of his services in New Zealand. However, at the end of January, 1840, Captain Hobson, R.N., arrived at the Bay of Islands with a commission appointing him Lieutenant-Governor of the group, thereby superseding Busby as representative of British rule.

Busby gave Hobson most loyal support and assisted him materially over the Treaty of Waitangi, that vital New Zealand historical landmark, obtaining to it the signatures of many influential chiefs.

With an idea of settling permanently in New Zealand, Busby had purchased from the Maoris, strictly in accordance with their customs, a block of 40,000 acres of grazing land at Whangarei and 10,000 of timber country near Auckland, where he had established a saw-mill. Crossing over to Sydney to buy cattle, he was appalled at finding that Governor Gipps—mainly on account of W. C. Wentworth's attempted land-grab of 20,000,000 acres in the South Island—was putting through the Legislative Council a bill cancelling all existing titles to land in New Zealand.

In spite of Busby's protests the bill was passed—though it was afterwards vetoed by the Colonial Office because, before it could become law, New Zealand had been constituted a colony. Busby returned to the Bay

of Islands, but could get nothing definite as to how he stood from Captain Hobson, so decided to go to England about it. After five weary years he returned with his claims still unsatisfied, and settled down on what land he had.

For ten years or more he published a ceaseless stream of pamphlets on local affairs, which were very unsatisfactory so far as responsible government was concerned, and in 1864 returned home to press his claims to the land he had been done out of, or alternatively to get compensation. Finally he was awarded £28,000 by arbitrators appointed in New Zealand—and was cheated out of it by what almost amounted to a confidence trick.

"The government," says the "Australian Encyclopædia," "not having so much spare cash, paid him with scrip that would be accepted, it said, at its face value in payment for any crown lands on sale in the province of Auckland—whereupon, according to Busby's story, the superintendent of lands promptly withdrew from sale every block of land in the province that was of any value."

While visiting England in hope of obtaining some redress for this manifest piece of sharp practice, Busby died in July, 1871. Better far for him had he stuck to Patrick's Plains and his pioneer vineyard at Kirkton.

Chapter XVII

PIONEERS OF THE VALLEY

THE lands of the Hunter Valley above the limit of navigation at the Green Hills (Morpeth) were opened up to settlers about the time of the departure of Governor Macquarie for England in 1822, and the list of the first settlers on the river who took up their land between 1821 and 1825 is a long one—too long for quotation here. It was made out by Mr. Surveyor Dangar in 1827, and contains 263 names. As to the status of these pioneers of the Valley, the Historical Records and those in the Lands Department of New South Wales and the office of the Chief Secretary, as well as the newspapers of the period, show that a large proportion of them belonged to the mercantile, professional and leisured classes, most of whom lived in Sydney and worked their properties through agents or managers.

Twenty-four of these settlers had been given grants by Governor Macquarie, and several dated back almost to his time, while many of the others were given to men who afterwards became notable in the history of the colony. The following biographical notes on some of their number are contained in a paper contributed to the Journal of The Royal Australian Historical Society by the late J. F. Campbell in 1926.

William Harper, principal assistant surveyor, seems to have been engaged with Henry Dangar on the early surveys of the Hunter River districts, but having become an invalid, and incapable of active field duty, his application for land received early consideration.

John Howe, chief constable at Windsor, on the Hawkesbury, having discovered a route between that river and the Hunter Valley, was rewarded by a licence to graze his stock at Patrick's Plains, and a few months afterwards by a grant of 700 acres in that neighbourhood. In 1824 he received an additional allotment of 500 acres higher up the river.

Of the twenty-four earliest grantees, all but four retained their lands until secured by deeds of grant, and notable among these was T. M. W. Winder, a Sydney merchant, who for a little while held a monopoly in the coal-mining industry at Newcastle, against which Governor Darling protested to Downing Street. His first grant of 760 acres was subsequently increased, and eventually he held 4,640 acres of Crown Lands on the Lower Hunter, some of which he had acquired by purchase.

Henry Dangar, who compiled the list of settlers referred to above, migrated from England to New South Wales in 1821, and obtained a position under Government as an assistant surveyor. He was engaged on surveys in and about the Hunter Valley up to 1827, when, owing to failure in establishing his claim to a block of land near Segenhoe, he retired from the civil service. He appealed to the authorities in England over the Segenhoe business and, whilst engaged in representing his case in London, published his "Guide to Emigrants," by Henry Dangar, with a sub-title of

"An Index and Directory to His Map of the Hunter River Valley."

About this time the ultimate position of the Australian Agricultural Company's huge land grant in New South Wales was under consideration, and Dangar's surveys in connection with the Port Stephens location, together with his knowledge of the northern region generally, becoming known to the directors in England, he was selected to assist Sir Edward Parry in the final adjustment of the grant. After having given outstanding service as a surveyor to the interests of the company, he took up pastoral pursuits. In addition to the land he had been granted in the Hunter Valley, he acquired several stations in the New England district, including "Gostwyck," near Armidale. His family name has been prominent ever since those days in the pastoral and mercantile circles of New South Wales.

There is not much of interest to be told concerning the remainder of the earlier settlers in the Valley, but some mention may be made of a few on whose behalf "Orders" were issued.

In 1819, Sarah and Elizabeth Jenkins were permitted by Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to settle in New South Wales. They sailed from England in the ship "Midas," owned and commanded by Joseph Underwood, and arrived in Sydney on February 14, 1821. In March of the same year orders for grants were issued, and they selected land on a tributary of the Hunter, afterwards named "Muscle Brook" (Muswellbrook). Their lands lay about three miles east of the site of the subsequently built town of that name.

Joseph Underwood, merchant and shipowner, was given a grant of 1,500 acres on the river some little distance above Wallis Plains—the grant was made out in the name of James Mitchell. Underwood's stores were for long a prominent feature of Lower George Street in Sydney. He was one of the leading merchants of the capital, and the owner of a number of trading vessels engaged in the Bass Straits seal fisheries and in the South Sea Islands.

Dr. Lawrence Halloran was granted an area of 300 acres a little to the north of the Green Hills (Morpeth), the rights of which he disposed of to John Cuneene. For some years, assisted by his daughter Laura, he conducted successfully a boys' school in Sydney, located at the intersection of Hunter and Phillip Streets.

George and Andrew Loder were allotted grants on Patrick's Plains, but they were either abandoned or sold prior to the issue of their titles. Their father, George Loder, Sen., son-in-law of John Howe, was allotted 150 acres close at hand. He and his son afterwards took up a large station near Quirindi, on the Liverpool Plains (Colley Creek).

Benjamin Singleton's grant became the site of the town of Singleton. Singleton, Philip Thornley and George Loder, Sen., had accompanied Howe in his exploration of the Upper Hunter in 1820, as related in a previous chapter.

During the first few years of settlement in the Valley, there was any amount of country stretching behind the lands taken up by early settlers for all the stock grazing in the Valley, but as settlement increased, additional pastoral land became necessary, especially

during dry seasons. So stockmen began to push over the Dividing Range above Murrurundi, squatting first of all on the Liverpool Plains, and afterwards in the New England and Gwydir districts. The northern limit of the settlement area, "beyond which land was neither sold nor let," was first described as bounded by a line from Cape Hawke, due west to Wellington Vale, but in 1829 it was more definitely described as by the Manning River to its source on Mount Royal, thence westerly by Mount Royal and the Liverpool Ranges, "to include all streams, valleys and ravines which descend to the Goulburn and Hunter's Rivers."

The most important estate of the Hunter Valley in this early period of its history was the special area granted to Thomas Potter Macqueen, M.P., of Park Lane in London. In a subsequent chapter the story of Segenhoe, as he named his property, is dealt with at some length, so it is not necessary to go into details about it here.

In Lord Bathurst's despatch to Governor Brisbane of August 4, 1823, the following announcement is made:—"Francis Forbes, Esq., has been appointed Chief Justice in the new court, and will immediately proceed to Sydney to enter upon the duties of his office."

Francis Forbes, the eldest son of the Hon. Francis Forbes, a member of the Bermuda Legislative Council, was born in the island in 1784. He arrived in Sydney on March 5, 1824, and acted as Chief Justice up to the middle of 1837, when he resigned and went home. On his subsequent return to the colony he became a pastoralist, in partnership with his brother George, and settled at Skellator on the Hunter River, near

Muswellbrook. In conformity with the regulations then in vogue respecting grants of land to civil servants, he was allowed 2,560 acres close to the site of the above-mentioned township, with a frontage to the Muscleebrook and the Hunter Rivers. He applied for an additional area of 10,000 acres in exchange for land he had acquired in the Bermudas, "which land, on his quitting that colony in 1815, he had settled upon his mother." The Surveyor-General was instructed to reserve 10,000 acres on the east and south sides of his grant, whilst awaiting instructions from the Secretary of State for the Colonies. His proposal, however, was not sanctioned, but Forbes was allowed to purchase the land. His name also is included in the lists of licencees as an occupier of lands beyond the limits outlined above. Knighted in 1836, before his retirement from the bench, he died in Sydney on November 6, 1841.

Robert and Helenus Scott landed in the colony on March 8, 1822, and in April were granted 2,000 acres of land northward of Wallis Plains. They named their estate "Glendon," and presently applied for an additional area of 10,000 acres "on the ground that they actually meant, and had ample means, to cultivate and stock land to that extent." Their application, which seems for a time to have been pigeon-holed, was re-submitted on January 3, 1826, on behalf of his brothers, by A. W. Scott, and received favourable recommendation by Governor Brisbane, who had returned to England. In his letter to the Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Brisbane stated that "Mrs. Scott's two sons, already settled in the colony, had frequently come under his personal observation as young men of great

promise . . . and were of superior education and acquirements, particularly the elder." The Scott brothers were most valuable settlers in every respect. Robert Scott died on July 30, 1844, his brother surviving him for some years.

Dr. James Bowman entered the navy as an assistant-surgeon in 1806, and was promoted to the rank of surgeon in the following year. He served in that rank until 1814, when he was placed on half-pay. He was appointed surgeon at Hobart in 1817, but when he arrived in Sydney found that his appointment was not recognised, because no official notification of it had been made to the colonial authorities. He returned home in 1819, and, after submitting his case to Lord Bathurst, was appointed principal surgeon in New South Wales, *vice* Surgeon D'Arcy Wentworth, who had resigned.

In applying for a land grant—he was allotted one a little distance above Patrick's Plains—he stated that he required a grant "commensurate with the stock he had acquired with his wife, the second daughter of John Macarthur, whom he had recently married." When the Australian Agricultural Company was formed in 1824, Dr. Bowman was appointed a member of the local committee of management, and filled the position until the arrival of Sir Edward Parry, the company's Commissioner.

Commander William Ogilvie, R.N., of "Merton," near Muswellbrook, applied for an extension of his grant on July 20, 1828, when he stated that was "an officer of thirty-four years' standing in His Majesty's Navy, twenty-seven of which he had been a lieutenant, having obtained his promotion to that rank when a

midshipman of the 'St. George,' Lord Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Copenhagen, for his services in the boats on that memorable day."

He had come to New South Wales in 1825, with his wife and family, and had been granted 2,000 acres, being allowed to reserve 4,000 more adjoining it for purchase. He was appointed Resident Magistrate of the Upper Hunter district, and was nominated a member of the Legislative Council on February 1, 1829. In his official capacity he took a prominent part in keeping the blacks in order and in the suppression of bushranging. Having applied for further grants of land in view of the increase of his flocks and herds, and being refused, he crossed the Liverpool Ranges and "squatted" in the Gwydir district.

George Lang, a brother of the Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang, of the Scots' Church in Sydney, arrived in the colony in 1821, and immediately received a grant of 400 acres from Governor Macquarie. He obtained a further grant of 1,000 acres on the Hunter River from Sir Thomas Brisbane, not far from the Green Hills (Morpeth). He had been employed in the Commissariat Department, but resigned at the end of 1824, and settled on his Hunter River estate. He died on January 18, 1825, but the property remained in the family, and was managed by his surviving brother, Andrew Lang.

Captain Francis Allman, who had come out in command of a convict transport's military guard in the ship "Minerva," landed in Sydney at the end of April, 1818. In March, 1821, he was appointed Commandant of the new convict settlement at Port Macquarie, to which place he was required to effect the transportation

of the convicts hitherto located at Newcastle. Three years later he became Commandant at Newcastle, and held the position until it was abolished in 1826. He was then given command of the police force. For some time he was Police Magistrate in Illawarra, and in 1834 became P.M. at Goulburn Plains. He was granted 2,560 acres nearly opposite the site of Muswellbrook, to which he added 640 acres by purchase. He was also indirectly interested in squatting enterprises in the New England district.

James Mudie, of "Castle Forbes," was so notoriously a bad master of assigned convict servants, that he deserves a chapter to himself. He may be taken, perhaps, as the very worst type of wealthy class of settlers in New South Wales in this period—but by no means does he stand alone. The story of the settlement of the Hunter Valley would be incomplete without some detailed reference to this cruel and tyrannical master of convict labour. It was men like Mudie who distorted the intended benevolences of "the System" into hopelessness and misery for the unfortunate men who became subject to their sadistic control.

Chapter XVIII

RUNAWAY CONVICTS

CONTINUING these brief notes relating to some of the pioneers of the Hunter Valley, we come to a memorial sent to Governor Gipps by Lieutenant James Reid under date of March 24, 1838, in which he informs His Excellency that "he emigrated to the colony in the year 1823, being then a lieutenant upon half pay." He states, also, that he brought with him an order from Earl Bathurst to Governor Brisbane that a grant of land should be given to him if the Governor approved. As he was prepared to maintain twenty convicts as labourers for ten years, the Governor allotted him a grant of 2,000 acres on the Hunter, situated between Newcastle and the Green Hills (Morpeth). He asked in the memorial for a second grant of land, pointing out that on an allotment he had been given in the town of Newcastle he had erected buildings valued at £2,000. His claim was not allowed, but he acquired a fairly large estate by purchase.

Amongst the more notable pioneers of the Hunter were Coloney Henry Dumaresq, of St. Hillier's, near Muswellbrook, and Edward Gostwyck Cory, of "Gostwyck" on the Paterson River. Others were Captain W. J. Dumaresq, of "St. Aubin's," near

Scone, Surgeon W. B. Carlyle, R.N., of "Invermien," in the same neighbourhood, and Lieutenant J. J. Cory, R.N., of "Coryvale" on the Paterson.

"The Sydney Gazette" of May 5, 1825, has something to say of another early settler on the Lower Hunter—Captain William Powditch. "Mr. Powditch, who was formerly commander of that fine large ship, the 'Royal George,' in which His Excellency, Sir Thomas Brisbane, and family came to our shores, is well known since that period to have emigrated hither. Mr. Powditch some months ago imported a valuable cargo of merchandise, and temporarily occupied a residence in Pitt Street, which now he has abandoned for a charming retreat in the vicinity of Hunter's River." A month later, "The Australian" mentions that: "William Powditch, having himself experienced the great want of a store or general warehouse at Newcastle for the supply of the Hunter River settlers, has determined upon opening a house of that nature immediately upon his allotment at Newcastle. . . . The business will be conducted by Mr. Frederick Boucher, under the firm of 'Powditch and Boucher.'"

Lieutenant Vickers Jacobs, an officer of the Honourable East India Company, comes in for a little unfavourable comment in a dispatch of Governor Brisbane's dated September 3, 1823. "Lieutenant Jacobs, an officer of the East India Company, certainly did arrive in Sydney, under the pretence of ill health, but in reality with a merchantile speculation. His brother officers, of whom there were many at the time convalescent in Sydney, shunned him, and publicly upbraided his unnatural alliance of the soldier and the shopkeeper. . . . Mr. Jacobs has been allowed to make

choice of an allotment in the town of Newcastle, and he has been given the temporary occupation of 2,000 acres of land . . . to be converted into a grant provided Mr. Jacobs remains in the colony." Jacobs resigned from the H.E.I. Company, and was eventually given possession of his 2,000 acres.

J. P. Webber, Justice of the Peace, was granted 2,000 acres on the right bank of the Paterson River, not far from the Green Hills (Morpeth), and later on 720 acres were added to it. He made an application subsequently to the Secretary of State for a further grant of 2,560 acres, but did not get it.

In 1822 Timothy Nowlan came out from Ireland to be a free settler in Van Diemen's Land, with the intention of going in for experimental sheep-breeding. But as he was not satisfied with the land allotted to him in the island, he applied in 1823 to Governor Brisbane for a grant in New South Wales. He was given a provisional allotment on the Hunter River, and was informed that he would be allowed another 2,000 acres if his experiments were successful. The land was situated some distance back from the right bank of the Paterson. Eventually he applied for, and was granted, a lease of the land for seven years. When the time was up, and he had been given notice to quit, he renewed his application for a grant, which was finally allowed him. He was also permitted to purchase the 3,800 acres reserved for lease in the first instance.

"The Australian" of November 10, 1825, prints an item of news which illustrates the dangers of pioneering at this early period of settlement in the Hunter Valley. It is a contribution from a correspondent at Patrick's Plains, somewhere about the present site of Singleton.



“Namoi”



“Patrick’s Plains, Hunter River, October, 1825.—On the morning of the 28th ult., a Mr. Forsyth and a Mr. Allen called at the hut of Mr. John (James) Greig, a settler, to breakfast, and on their entering the hut, they found Mr. Greig a corpse, lying on the ground with his head beaten to a mummy, and, as his stockman was absent, and has not since been heard of, there is reason to believe that the poor fellow has shared the fate of his master. Two other stockmen have been speared, and a man of Captain Pike’s narrowly escaped being murdered by them (the blacks) owing to the arrival of two men, who found him in the act of struggling with the native for a spear. . . .

“Mr. Greig was a respectable and industrious settler, and was one of the owners of the brig ‘Amity,’ in which vessel he arrived in this country from Scotland about eighteen months ago.”

William Dun was allotted an area of 1,300 acres on the Paterson, a little way below the site of the subsequent township, and applied for a further grant to bring it up to 2,000 acres. His application has a curious though worthy reason for its lodging. “At the time the land was given to me,” he says, “Newcastle was a penal settlement, and in the district there were only three or four settlers, and many Government cedar parties, and they were under so little control on a Sunday that, at the request of Major Morrisset, the Commandant at Newcastle, I collected the prisoner settlers, and these men, as well as many of the cedar parties, on a Sunday, about five miles from my residence, and performed divine service to them. For this duty, which I continued to perform for upwards of two years, I considered the land as given to me.”

The author of one of the best books written about this period—"Two Years in New South Wales"—was one of the early Hunter River settlers. This was Surgeon Peter Cunningham, R.N. He had a grant of 2,560 acres, and applied for an additional area—the estate was on the outskirts of Patrick's Plains. His application affords some interesting information with regard to the pastoral quality of his holding. He says that "he had 600 sheep and 120 cattle and horses, and that the carrying capacity of his land was at the rate of three acres to a sheep, or ten acres per head of cattle"; also, that his stock doubled every three years. He states that "stock has depreciated in value 400 per cent. within the last four years."

Dr. Francis Moran arrived in the colony on May 31, 1822, and three months later was given a position as assistant surgeon on the medical staff. He received a grant of 1000 acres on the Hunter almost immediately, but sold it to H. Osburne, in whose name the deeds were issued. He was stationed at Port Macquarie for several years, and on his return to the Hunter practised his profession at Wallis Plains (Maitland).

In the first period of settlement conditions were peaceful in the Valley, but it was hardly five years old when bushranging broke out within its territories. This account of the worst outbreak of the time is taken from "The Australian" newspaper in July, 1825.

"On Friday, the 1st instant, Mr. Reid brought Mr. Jacobs's shepherd before Captain Allman and Mr. Close for neglect of duty, and for being deficient four wethers which he could not in any manner account for, in consequence of which those magistrates sentenced the shepherd to receive a corporal punishment of fifty

lashes, and to be returned to government employ. On his way to Newcastle, he effected his escape from the constable who had him in charge, and that night, or early next morning, stole three mares and two colts from Mr. Reid's, and on the Monday morning at seven o'clock, just as Mr. Vicar Jacobs's men had been ordered to the different employments on the farm, and all of them had gone excepting two, this shepherd, by name Reiby, and these two, rushed into the house, seized the overseer, tied his hands behind his back, and then to one of the verandah posts . . . and after having secured him they seized two muskets and a sabre . . . and proceeded to where each of the other two men were, and having tied them to trees, they plundered the house of blankets, provisions, and other articles likely to be of service to them. Very fortunately, however, one of them got himself disengaged in the course of two hours, and then liberated the rest; when the overseer immediately ran to my (McLeod's) farm and informed me of the whole occurrence. . . . We traced the horses to the top of a mountain about eight miles distant, where we found them tethered and almost the whole of the articles plundered from Mr. Jacobs's concealed under fallen trees. . . . Last night they robbed Mr. D. Mazier's overseer of two muskets, and all the ammunition he had, and all his provisions.

"August 4th.—Recent advices from the settlement at Newcastle state that the bushrangers in that neighbourhood are increasing in number, and are continuing their outrages with a good deal of success. . . . Respecting these desperadoes, five men have absconded from Mr. Boughton's farm at Paterson's Plains, for the purpose of joining Mr. Jacobs's men. One man has run

from Mr. Cobb's farm, and one from the town of Newcastle.

"Eight soldiers, accompanied by black natives, have been sent in pursuit of them.

"Lieutenant Hicks' farm has been visited by them and stripped of provisions, firearms, etc. . . . Mr. M'Clymant's farm has also been plundered by them.

"On the 26th ult. . . . the bushrangers were traced by a party of natives to a brush above the farm of Mr. Cory, Senr., at Paterson's Plains, and a party of soldiers stationed there, accompanied by three constables, went in pursuit of them.

"August 6th.—The day before yesterday I had the pleasure in informing you that Mr. Jacobs's Irish brigade was, by the active and praiseworthy exertions of Mr. R. Scott, the magistrate at Patrick's Plains, in custody, and that the arrival of the party was hourly expected here, when they would be in safe keeping. I now regret to acquaint you that after Mr. Scott had handed them over to a party of the military at Wallis Plains (a corporal and four privates, and a constable), these suffered themselves to be surprised by their prisoners, although the prisoners had handcuffs on. The prisoners took from the soldiers unresistingly five muskets, ammunition, all their provisions, clothing, etc. They went to O'Donnel's farm . . . and then proceeded on their march. The party now consisted of Mr. Jacobs's four men, one of Mr. Mudie's men, and a servant of Dr. Moran. . . .

"August 11.—The desperadoes, who have given so much annoyance at Wallis and Paterson's Plains, are at length taken. . . ."

Runaway convict bushrangers gave much trouble to

pioneer families in their homesteads, and by plundering and killing their stock, but the native blacks, also, were an occasional source of danger. In 1826 the following outrages were committed by the aborigines, chiefly in the Upper Hunter district. R. Scott and A. McLeod, Justices of the Peace, made the following joint statements regarding their hostile attitude—one which, no doubt, had been wantonly provoked by the conduct toward them of convict settlers and absconders.

“It is our opinion that the first cause of ill-blood originated in a communication between the Mudjee blacks and those on Hunter’s River. . . . Several acts of aggression were committed, such as food and clothes being forcibly obtained from some of the lone stock stations; for instance, Mr. Onus’ station at Wollombi Brook. . . . Then followed several petty robberies on single individuals, while travelling the long and lonely road from Dr. Bowman’s upwards, such as stripping them of their clothes and provisions. . . .

“Mr. Greig and his shepherd soon after were murdered without any apparent cause, unless Mr. Greig’s known aversion to having the natives about him might have excited their hatred. The same tribe who committed this murder, fearful of our vengeance, removed, together with the Wallumbi natives, into the mountains, and then again they were guilty of another atrocity by murdering one man and dreadfully lacerating another. This happened at Mr. Laycock’s station. . . . The mounted police now arrived and were called into action in consequence of an attack by the natives on Mr. John Forbes’ station, when one of his men was speared in the shoulder. . . .

“Shortly after this Dr. Bowman’s stockman was

attacked, and stripped quite naked in the bush, and a day or two afterwards the same gentleman's watchman was murdered in his hut. . . . A few days afterwards the same natives went to James Chilcott's farm and attempted by force to plunder the house. One of the natives, named Cato, had a struggle with Chilcott for a gun, when a general engagement took place, and the natives were beaten off without the loss of any lives, the white people only firing at their legs. . . .

"The house of Mr. Ogilvie (the Resident Magistrate), during his absence, was attacked by a large body of blacks . . . and in consequence of Mrs. Ogilvie's judicious and spirited conduct, the natives retired without doing any further harm than stealing a quantity of maize from the house. Then followed a daring and most shocking attack on Mr. Lethbridge's farm, when the hut was suddenly surrounded and two men killed and one wounded, before they had time to defend themselves. The fourth man was severely wounded while defending the hut, after the others had fallen, his wife and two children having been sheltered under the bed during the attack. The natives succeeded in plundering the huts adjacent, and retired in consequence of one of the shepherds having run towards Mr. Glennie's. The mounted police went in pursuit. . . . Subsequent to this, another attack was made upon five fencers in the employ of Dr. Bowman, who, while at work, were alarmed by their dog barking. They fired upon the blacks, and, it is supposed, wounded one."

All this, according to the magistrates, had happened within the previous ten months.

Chapter XIX

MUDIE OF CASTLE FORBES

OF the early Governors of New South Wales, one of the most popular, benevolent and successful in administration was Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., Governor-General from 1831 to 1837. But he had his troubles and annoyances, and one of the worst of these was connected with the man whose name, with that of his estate at Patrick's Plains on the Hunter, makes a heading for this chapter.

James Mudie had at one time held a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Marines, from which distinguished corps he seems to have been permitted to retire under some sort of a cloud. He then went into partnership with certain booksellers in a speculation for manufacturing medals of the chief actors in the Peninsular campaign and the brief one that ended with the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. The production of the medals having been delayed until the people they portrayed had been almost dropped from public interest, Mudie and his associates in the business had to go through the bankruptcy courts, from which he was eventually discharged as a certified insolvent. Out of this connection with the production of medals, Mudie acquired the nickname of "Major Medallion,"

which, after a time, became abbreviated to that of "the Major." Afterwards, in New South Wales, the owner of Castle Forbes was sometimes alluded to as "the Major" by people who were ignorant of the fact that he had no pretensions to any military title at all save the plain "Esquire" that might be supposed to go with his status as a retired junior subaltern officer.

He got into very low water after his bankruptcy, but had the good fortune to be befriended by a benefactor—Sir Charles Forbes—who assisted him to emigrate with his family to New South Wales.

On his arrival, with letters of introduction from his patron, he applied for a land grant and obtained a very good one at Patrick's Plains, which, with a decency he seldom otherwise exhibited, he named after the man who had come to his assistance in the period of his distress. In a few years his holding developed extensively, and was considered of sufficient importance by the Department of the Comptroller of Convicts to permit of his being assigned the slave labour of between 40 and 50 prisoners of the Crown.

Mudie was a veritable "nigger driver," and contrived to exact from his assigned servants the maximum of labour at the lowest cost to himself for rations and clothing. He had unpleasant theories regarding the meaning of transportation and prison discipline. The extension to the unfortunates in his employment of any sort of indulgence was not to be considered for a moment, and he had no high-minded notions about reformation. He regarded lasting punishment as the well-deserved lot of all who had gone astray or offended against the social code. He always acted as though the unsparing use of the cat-o'-nine-tails was the only

way in which convicts should be treated, and more than once expressed an opinion that men who had been prisoners should never be forgiven—even after they had finished their sentences.

Dr. West, the historian of early Van Diemen's Land, drew a contrast between Mudie and other employers of assigned labour. "According to Mudie's doctrine," he said, "They (the convicts) were sent to New South Wales to be punished; such was his theory. Mudie spoke of the men he employed in the tone of an executioner: 'Nothing could wash away their guilt or obliterate its brand.' James Macarthur (of Camden Park) describes his own plan as the reverse. He knew that a severe gaoler could not be esteemed as a good master. He endeavoured to make his servants forget that they were convicts."

Mudie "made no bones" about acknowledging his ideas concerning the treatment of convicts. In the spiteful, lying and vindictive volume he published on returning to England—"The Felonry of New South Wales"—he thus avows his miserable sentiments: "Regarding their (the convicts') punishment as a means of deterring other persons in England from the commission of similar crimes, the prolongation of the punishment is justified even in cases in which the reformation may have already been accomplished."

This delightful gentleman practised what he preached. It lay in his hands for years—this power of enforcing his acknowledged doctrines. Tickets-of-leave were rarely won by the unhappy beings who toiled for him at Castle Forbes—"the high-sounding name that," says a contemporary commentator, "in compliment to his benefactor, Mudie bestowed upon a

number of detached slab-huts and rickety wigwams huddled together in his establishment." Flogging was perpetual on his station—with the natural result that the outraged feelings, moral as well as physical, of his wretched serfs found expression in desperate acts of insubordination and reprisal.

The most flagrant instance of this breeding of violent crime in its history whilst under the domination of this damnable fellow took place when five of his men, goaded beyond endurance, absconded from Castle Forbes and "took to the bush." They tried to shoot his son-in-law, John Larnach, who acted as his superintendent, but does not seem to have been quite so heartlessly callous to suffering in others as his employer. After being hunted for some time by the mounted police, they were at length captured and committed for trial in Sydney. Sir Roger Therry, afterwards a Supreme Court judge in New South Wales, gives in his "Reminiscences" details of the case of the five doomed men in which, acting for their defence, he was himself engaged.

"Convicts on their trial for capital offences," he says, "were usually unprovided with counsel; they had seldom (except cattle-stealers, who were a wealthy tribe of robbers) means to defray the cost of a defence. In such cases as the trial of aboriginal natives, Government defrayed the expense of counsel for the prisoners; but this provision did not extend to convicts. There was at this time, however, a benevolent person in Sydney, possessed of ample means, who, on condition only that his name should not be disclosed, defrayed the cost of counsel in several trials of convicts on capital charges; and on this occasion it happened to me to be thus employed as counsel for Mudie's men.

"The trial presented a truly painful exhibition. The men took their places in the dock, and I took mine at the bar, in utter hopelessness of their escape from conviction. They had repeatedly declared before the trial, and afterward, that they would prefer death to being returned to the service of their late employer. Evidence of their guilt was too transparent to admit of doubt; and the only line of defence, that I conceived in any way available for them, was to show that their treatment had been such as to present some mitigating features which might lead to the infliction of a punishment short of death. By this course, no doubt, I greatly displeased Mudie, and all who identify the duties of counsel with his private opinions, and look upon him as the approver of the crime, and not the mere defender of the criminal. The men were tried under a local ordinance, called 'The Bushrangers' Act,' which rendered them liable to execution twenty-four hours after sentence. They were found 'Guilty'; and then ensued such a scene in court as is not likely again to be enacted in New South Wales, or, it may be hoped, anywhere.

"On being called upon in the usual solemnity of form to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon them, Hitchcock, the most intelligent of the five men, said he had no ground to offer, but he implored the Government to institute an inquiry into their past treatment; the floggings they had undergone; the frivolous excuses resorted to for the purpose of depriving them of their liberty after they had served a period that entitled them to its partial enjoyment, by being granted tickets-of-leave; the bad and insufficient

food they had received; the system of merciless infliction of the lash throughout the district of the Hunter River. On behalf of the convict population he implored this act of justice and of mercy. He proceeded to denounce by name the proprietors on whose establishments he alleged that floggings were incessant. Hitchcock was stopped by the Court, and he concluded by requesting permission that he and his fellow prisoners might be permitted to exhibit their lacerated backs to the public gaze in Court, to show what torture they had endured. This request, of course, could not be complied with; the fatal sentence was passed, and they were executed. The Solicitor-General (Mr. Plunkett) humanely forbore to insist on their execution in twenty-four hours after the sentence, and assented to their having a reasonable time to prepare for death."

The unhappy victims of Mudie's callous brutality were all young, healthy men whose ages varied between twenty and thirty-two. One was a first-class carpenter and two others were mechanics. "The whole scene," says Therry, "caused a shudder that thrilled, not only through the Court, but through the heart of the Colony. They died with the same expression of complaint on their lips as those to which they gave utterance on the trial."

Sir Richard Bourke caused an inquiry to be held, and it was conducted by two trustworthy civil officials, who condemned utterly the manner in which assigned servants were treated at Castle Forbes. But this, of course, did nothing for the five lads dead of the hangman's ropes and rotting in their graves, with only the odium cast upon their oppressor to compensate for the hard and cruel end their servitude had brought them.

Mudie was much in the limelight during his Australian career, and that searching illumination brings out little that is likeable in his reputation or his career. He took a prominent part in persecuting a ticket-of-leave man who was a sort of sub-editor, or second-in-command, of "The Sydney Gazette." Watt had come to light as the writer of a pamphlet entitled "Humanitas," and as the author of several articles in the "Gazette" dealing severely with the unpaid magistracy as a whole and with Mudie in particular. To some extent Watt was victorious, being acquitted more than once of vindictive charges which Mudie trumped up against him—but for the sake of peace and quiet the Governor exiled him to Port Macquarie, where he was accidentally drowned soon after his arrival.

The rest of Mudie's life was as discreditable as his association with the estate of Castle Forbes. Soon after the trials mentioned above he returned to England, and was a witness before a Parliamentary Select Committee on Transportation in 1835. His evidence was so spiteful and prejudiced that some of it was directed to be expunged from the records, and other parts of it were contradicted in the press and elsewhere.

He came back to New South Wales later on, but found himself virtually "in Coventry" amongst the better class of colonists. After a short stay in Sydney, in which he found bad trouble, he went home again, unregretted by anyone, but leaving behind him a reputation, in the Hunter Valley particularly, that was wholly unenviable.

Before he finally left Sydney he was publicly horse-whipped in George Street by a son of the Attorney-General, Mr. Kinchela, whose deafness Mudie had

ridiculed in "The Felonry of New South Wales" in a pretty heartless fashion. He underwent a severe drubbing at the young man's hands, and was moved thereby to bring an action for assault against his castigator. The jury awarded him £50 damages, but young Kinchela's drastic treatment of the "Major" was so popularly acclaimed that both damages and costs were immediately paid in the Court-room by a subscription taken up on the spot.

Mudie's book, referred to above, "The Felonry of New South Wales," although suppressed for a time on account of the manifold libels it contained, was published in London in 1837, and while to anyone acquainted with historical facts in New South Wales at this period it is a spiteful, vindictive and misleading piece of work, is nevertheless eminently readable and has some value as an historical document. This is the case if only because it shows how men of Mudie's sort—and there were others like him in New South Wales in the second quarter of the nineteenth century—could regard the unfortunate convicts who had been sent to these shores, theoretically at anyrate, to give them a chance of making something of their lives that would have been entirely denied them in Great Britain. It is undeniably clever, even if disgustingly malicious. After reading it there is little difficulty in recognising how natural it was that even the comparatively few people to be found in a law court on a given day would be eager to put their hands in their pockets to pay the damages and costs given against any man who had horsewhipped such a fellow as James Mudie.

There must still be many people in the Hunter Valley who, like the writer, can recall impressions

received from his contemporaries as to what an unsavoury person he must have been, the Squire of Castle Forbes.

There is an extremely rare book—it may be seen in the Mitchell Library at Sydney—in which James Mudie, Esquire, attempts to gild James Mudie. It is cleverly unconvincing, though well worth reading. Here is the title-page of the little volume, which was printed by “Monitor” Hall in 1834. Hall can be well imagined accepting the job with his tongue in his cheek.

VINDICATION

of

James Mudie and John Larnach from certain reflections
on their conduct contained in letters addressed to them
respectively

Through the

COLONIAL SECRETARY OF NEW SOUTH
WALES

By order of

HIS EXCELLENCY, GOVERNOR BOURKE

Relative to the treatment by them of their

CONVICT SERVANTS,

etc.

BY JAMES MUDIE, Esq.

SYDNEY

Printed by E. S. Hall, George Street

September, 1834

It is as readable, and unreliable, as “The Felony of New South Wales,” confirming every idea one might be inclined to entertain as to James Mudie being a specious rogue and an unmitigated liar.

Chapter XX

THE VALLEY ROAD

ABOUT the time when the Crimean War was in full swing, and ladies wore crinolines and braided their hair in nets, a little red-headed boy of twelve waited at the old Highland Home Inn for the coach to Morpeth, which would be due at Wingen from Murrurundi by breakfast time. A desolate little lad he was, for it was the beginning of term, and he was going back to The King's School at Parramatta, and the occasion, as it always was and always will be to small boys, whether they travel by four-horse coach or aeroplane, was a melancholy one.

Down the road that led up the wooded valley past the Burning Mountain to Warland's Range, along the she-oak shaded Kingdon Ponds Creek, would presently clatter and trundle, its team at a canter, the great lumbering vehicle, boot bulging with mail-bags and passengers' luggage, that was to bear him away from freedom and deposit him in the old Hunter River port of embarkation near East Maitland, where the wondrous steam-packet would navigate him down to Sydney and servitude, and Parramatta and punishments, if he didn't work hard and comport himself with circumspection. All too swiftly had the holidays slipped

away here in the ranges bordering Page's River, all too swiftly would the coach's four horses haul him away from the cattle to the class-room—from the delights of liberty to the doleful contingencies of discipline. In the space of three days—so swift and speedy had travelling become in these latter years—the things that were worth while have given place to the things that were worthless and of no account. Very naturally, he was not happy.

The coach came, and side-whiskered gentlemen in peg-top trousers and top-hats got down from the roof and emerged from its interior, and went inside to eat pork chops and peach jam on thick slabs of bread and butter, whilst the one haughty but beautiful lady passenger lifted her wide hoops, displaying a pretty ankle as she tripped across the verandah of the inn to the dining-room, and captivated the amatory sensibilities of sundry bearded and sunburnt men whose present occupation, even at this early hour, was the consumption of Jimmy Hyde's bad rum in his evil-smelling, low-ceiled bar-room across the passage. The little boy carried his carpet-bag to the coach, much cheered by the warm welcome accorded him by driver Peter Malone, who, having already broken his fast in Murrurundi, sat upon the box, holding the reins loosely in his big and powerful right hand, and smoking a short and grimy clay pipe that stuck out of his hairy features like a little chimney.

"Climb up here, Johnny-boy," he said. "I tole y'r mother I'd keep a seat for ye. Well, then, it's th' lucky kiddy ye are—for to be a-goin' back to school. I never had no schoolin' at all—on'y what I larnt in th' brandin' yards, an' roun' th' cow-bail, and in th'

flamin' stables. Stiffen me, Johnny, ye did ought to be as jolly as a piccaninny with all them there hadvantages. Don't tell me ye hain't!"

So Johnny-boy climbed up—maybe a little sceptical as to the advantages he was supposed to be enjoying, but manfully unwilling to correct Mr. Malone—and presently they drove off. The Northern Road might be a *via dolorosa* to him that morning, but Peter Malone would not know it. So he pretended to burst his sad little heart with joy, and laughed uproariously at Peter's broad and clumsy witticisms.

Down past Captain's Lagoon and Cressfield—it was from Cressfield, over a century ago, that Dr. Little discovered the Burning Mountain at Wingen—and across the long flats on old St. Aubin's station, leaving the Black Mountain on their near hind wheel, and they came to the Golden Fleece Hotel in Scone, where they changed horses, and whence they presently drove on through Segenhoe to Muswellbrook. Here again they changed horses—the coaches were well-horsed, and liberally, in 1855. "Boshy" Nowland had the mail contract, and though he was reckoned "a bit of a nailer," there was nothing mean about the way he dragged his coaches up and down the Valley. Cobb and Co. hadn't yet arrived on the old North Road.

Segenhoe was a famous place in those days. The old hands called it Seej'nhoe, with the accent on the first syllable. Ten years and more, it was, since Mrs. Potter Macqueen, its owner's beautiful wife, had queened it there, the handsomest and haughtiest lady in the Valley. It used to be said—though whether truthfully or not the writer does not know, that she had run away with a medical man from Muswellbrook,

leaving on her husband's hands the immense bath-tub, carved out of a solid block of Carara marble, specially imported from Italy by her doting spouse, in which she used to bathe in milk for the good of her skin and complexion. Tradition had it also that the milk was afterwards handed over to the convict servants for their consumption. The bath is still at Segenhoe, where we will take a closer look at it in the next chapter.

And so on down the valley to Patrick's Plains, and thence through the Maitlands to Morpeth, goes little red-headed Johnny on his way back to The King's School—and now we will take a look at the Valley Road as it was twenty years before that sad occasion.

"The New South Wales Calendar and General Post Office Directory" for the year 1833 gives an itinerary of roads "leading to various parts of the colony." The old North Road crossed the Hawkesbury at Wiseman's Ferry, traversing the mountain ranges separating the two rivers, and came into the Hunter Valley on Patrick's Plains. We will follow it up the Valley from the present position of Singleton to where the town of Murrurundi lies below the point at which it crosses the Dividing Range and descends on to the Liverpool Plains. Reprinted in full—though not exactly in the same form as it is presented in the "calendar," the description runs:—

"Here (at 137½ miles from Sydney) it branches off, the one track going straight to the Twickenham Meadows, and more particularly to Merton, the residence of William Ogilvie, J.P., and the farm of Dr. Peter Cunningham, the author of 'Two Years' Residence in New South Wales.' These farms are about 25 miles from Glennies'. The other track turns to the

south, crossing the Hunter at Blaxland's and Doyle's farms, and continuing upwards, along the bank of the Hunter, it crosses the Goulburn a little above its confluence with the Hunter and follows the course of Gungai Brook, being the road to Gammon Plains, Bow Plains, Waibong, etc.

"To the south of the confluence are some small farms, and the grants of Greig, Doyle and Wilkinson, and a curious valley called Carter's Valley, through which flows a chain of ponds. To the north, as far down the Hunter as Muscle Brook, the whole of the land is located—the track is known as Twickenham Meadows: the soil is a fine red loam, of such great depth, and although it is very fertile in wet seasons, in dry ones it becomes a desert. At 147 cross a chain of ponds, forming a creek that has no other name; the water is very brackish. At 150, one mile on the left is the marked line for the new North Road. 154—farms of the Misses Jenkins. 155—enter the estate of Chief Justice Forbes. 156—cross Muscle Brook, and enter a village reserve.

"To the left (157½), about a quarter of a mile, Muscle Brook enters the Hunter, and a little further down the new road will cross that river. From this neighbourhood there is a track extending north-westerly to the Waibong. Crosses St. Helier's Brook at 160, and enters the estate of Colonel Dumaresq. On the left (161½) is the house of St. Helier's, the residence of Colonel Dumaresq, remarkable for the beauty of its situation and the elegance of the house, and a little further up, the Dart Brook joins the Hunter from the west.

"164—enter the village reserve extending to 165½,

where you ford the Hunter and enter the lands of Messrs. Dangar and Macintyre." (This would be the present position of Aberdeen.) "One mile up the Hunter, Segenhoe, the magnificent estate of Potter Macqueen, Esq., commences, containing 24,000 acres, and extending about six miles up the Hunter and about eight miles up Page's Creek. Enough has been said of the park-like scenery of the Hunter, but nothing in the colony, if taken as a whole, can compare with Segenhoe.

"Further up the Hunter lies the beautiful estate of Belltrees, the property of H. C. Semphill, Esq., J.P., possessing the unusual advantage of having nine miles of river frontage embedded in a beautiful amphitheatre, through which the Hunter winds, approached by a romantic pass between two conical-shaped mountains; the lands being left in equal parts on both sides of the river, thereby dividing them between the counties of Durham and Brisbane.

"Further up the Page are the grants of Messrs. Stewart and White, at Gunda Gunda (Gundy), and a recent selection of 13,000 acres made by Hart Davis, Esq. The road continues through St. Germain's Meadows, 167. On the left is the confluence of Dart Brook with the Kingdon Ponds, 171½. On the left is the bridle track to Liverpool Plains. This track first crosses Kingdon Ponds, then enters Holdsworthy Downs, then crosses Dart Brook to the estate of John Bingle, Esq., J.P., consisting of many purchased farms."

The town of Scone is situated in this neighbourhood.

"The track now follows the course of Dart Brook, through the grants of Messrs. Scales and Bell, and about 184 miles from Sydney is the grant of E. Sparke,

Junr., on the opposite side of the creek; at about 188 miles on the left is the grant, extending southerly to Waibong, and particularly to the residence of Mr. Forsyth, and onwards by Gammon Plains, Bow Plains and Bilong, to Mudgee. The Waibong track connects also with the Gungal track, leading to the confluence of the Goulburn and Hunter.

"Continuing up Dart Brook, at 193 miles from Sydney, you gain the summit of the Liverpool Range, and continuing along it about a mile and a half, descend into the Plains. On your left, the nearest point of the range is Terell, distant about four miles, and about eight miles further is Wereid, or Oxley's Peak—Moan, or Mount Macarthur, and others, the most prominent points in the range. To the right is Towarra, about two miles off, and Tinagroo, about six miles further.

"Continuing up the valley of the Kingdon Ponds, on the east bank, at 172½, is a large Government reserve. With a few exceptions, the locations now cease, but the whole district, from Muscle Brook upwards, is entirely located, the soil being somewhat similar to Twickenham Meadows, but the surface more undulating.

"176—pass through the grants of Dale and Wm. Dumaresq, Esq. On the west is a township (the present Parkville) and another Government reserve at 177, and at 179 is Mr. Geo. Sparke's grant, and on the west is the grant of Dr. Little.

"About six miles on the right (184) is the Burning Hill of Wingen, the only hill of that description at present known in New Holland, or indeed elsewhere, for it is *sui generis*. The whole of the surrounding country abounds with petrifications and interesting

geological specimens, which have been described both to the public here and to the learned societies in England, by the Rev. C. P. N. Wilton, Chaplain of Newcastle. On the left (at 187) is a grant of Mr. A. Livingstone.

"Cross the range dividing the waters of Kingdon Ponds and those of Page's River at 188, and about a mile to the left is Merrylaw (Murulla), a lofty conic mountain, a point in a range connecting with the Liverpool Range at Tinagroo. 192—meet the waters of Page's River, which takes its rise between the Merrylaw and the Liverpool Ranges, and flows easterly to Stewart's and White's grants at Gunda Gunda.

"On the north bank of the Page are the grants of Warland and Onge. Following up the course of the Page, and crossing its channel two or three times, at 198 miles you cross the Dividing Range and enter Liverpool Plains. On these extensive flats are many stations, and the road thus far is a very well marked cart track at present across a low part of that mountain barrier which forms the present limits of the Colony, on the north."

Chapter XXI

SEGENHOE

THERE were several notable estates in the Hunter Valley during the first decades of its settlement and adaptation to pastoral purposes—Ravensworth, Neotsfield, Merton, Bengalla, Kayuga, Edinglassie, St. Helier's, St. Aubin's, Invermien, Yarrandi, and Satur—but there is not room for them all in this little volume, so we will have to content ourselves with a glance at one or two. Castle Forbes has, as it were, been forced upon us by the malignant ghost of James Mudie, and now the benevolent shade of Potter Macqueen urges us to take a look at what he did, or tried to do, with Segenhoe.

For many years old Segenhoe station—the writer used to hear contemporary stories of the place from his grandmother—has been a legend of the Upper Hunter. Little remains of it now save the venerable and picturesque homestead—that solid old Georgian mansion—and a couple of thousand acres surrounding it (it has been cut up into dairy farms), but it has always been regarded as one of the most “historic” estates in the district wherein it is situated, almost midway between the towns of Muswellbrook and Scone, and in the near neighbourhood of Aberdeen.

On July 21, 1823, Thomas Potter Macqueen, dating

his letter from Park Lane in London, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Earl Bathurst, applying for a land grant of 20,000 acres in New South Wales. He was informed, in reply, that Lord Bathurst would allow him an allotment of 10,000 acres, "which is as large a grant as His Lordship thinks it proper to make to any individual, but he will take care to direct that ten thousand acres adjoining may be kept in reserve with the view of your obtaining that addition when the first grant is brought into successful cultivation." On October 21, 1823, Governor Brisbane was authorised to make such a grant, and his successor, General Darling, executed it in July, 1826, when the estate of Segenhoe came into being at the point where the Page River runs into the Hunter.

Macqueen did not find settling on the land in New South Wales altogether plain sailing, and he had a good deal of trouble over his application and the grant he received, as a petition to authority on his part amply demonstrates. In his own words:—

"Memorial of Thomas Potter Macqueen, at present resident in Sydney in the Colony of New South Wales, sheweth:—

"That in the month of August, 1824, your memorialist, in consideration, amongst other things, of his declared intention to invest large sums of money in agricultural pursuits within the Colony of New South Wales, received from the Right Honourable the Earl Bathurst, at that time His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, an order to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, to make your memorialist a Primary Grant of twenty thousand acres of land within the said Colony."

The memorial goes on to state that this grant carried all the customary rights and privileges, and that, having received it, he chartered and sent out from England to New South Wales two ships, the "Hugh Crawford," 420 tons, and the "Nimrod" of 260. The ships transported a number of specially selected shepherds, agricultural labourers and mechanics for the purpose of improving the land that was to be allotted him.

The ships also carried to Australia "a fine flock of Saxon sheep, and another of merinos," some sheep dogs, two stallions, pure bred Durham, Down and Highland cattle—the sire of one of the Durham bulls had cost 1000 guineas—and all sorts of agricultural implements, at a total cost of £8000. The land taken up was occupied in 1826, and by 1830, £18,000 was spent upon it. That Segenhoe was being worked to the best advantage is vouched for by such authorities as Mr. Surveyor Dangar and Dr. Peter Cunningham, R.N., author of "Two Years in New South Wales."

In 1830 Macqueen appointed H. C. Semphill to manage Segenhoe, and a further sum of £16,000 was spent on the estate in six years, making a total for stock and improvements of £42,000.

In the memorial quoted above Macqueen claims to have employed and maintained 160 convicts, and to have brought out from Great Britain the wives and families of about twenty prisoners. He also states that most of these assigned men, after acquiring their freedom, had settled on the estate as tenant farmers. During the severe drought lasting from 1827 to 1830, he had supplied almost the whole of the Upper Hunter district with grain. He maintained that all these ser-

vices to the colony entitled him to more than the ordinary grant of 2500 acres. He therefore asked for a special grant of that area to be an addition to the 20,000 acres already allotted him. The maintenance of each convict, he asserted, relieved the Crown of an expenditure of £25 per annum—though Henry Dangar reckoned the cost of each man would be about £16. He stated that more than 200 convicts had passed through his hands, and gave the following particulars of them:—

Became free, or with tickets-of-leave, married, and thoroughly reclaimed, 14; became free, or with tickets-of-leave, single, and thoroughly reclaimed, 49; free from expiration of sentence, but worthless, 7; free, and returned home, 1; good conduct men still under sentence, 62; indifferent and untrustworthy, 29; depraved and irreclaimable, 7; sent to iron-gangs and penal settlements for further crimes, 11; dead—one of old age and two casualties—3; given up at request of Government, 2; returned to hospital on account of ill-health, 4; total 191. To this number were to be added about 15 new arrivals not yet classified.

“One of the most important methods of ensuring reformation is to allow the well-disposed men every opportunity of benefiting by their own industry. Government exacts a fixed quantity of labour from every man; a pair of sawyers must cut a certain portion per day; a shearer must shear twenty-five sheep”—Macqueen continues his observations, as set forth in the memorial. “When these prescribed tasks be finished they consider their time their own, and unless their masters allow them remuneration for extra work, that time will probably be badly spent. It is forbidden to pay money

to prisoners, at least before they obtain their tickets: the remuneration, therefore, consists of tea, sugar, tobacco, Cape wine, extra clothing, etc. I had a Scotchman who has shorn one hundred and one sheep in the day, being allowed at the rate of two shillings and sixpence per score above twenty-five. I have seen my sawyers and fencers working by moonlight, others making tin vessels for utensils, bows for bullocks, etc., in their huts at night.

"The consequence is a degree of comfort in reclaimed prisoners most gratifying to observe, and which, if it was properly understood, would go far to induce the superabundant rural population of England to overstep the bounds which ignorance and prejudice have laid down, and exchange their squalid, hopeless poverty for the substantial blessings which emigration offers to them. At Christmas, 1837, I had an application from one of my convicts (who had a narrow escape from the gallows at home) to be permitted to draw the amount of his extra labour in certain articles from my stores, as he wished to give an entertainment to his colleagues, all of whom were named and well considered men. As the party in question was industrious and well-behaved and was particularly cleanly in his hut, and took a pride in his garden, poultry, etc., his request was accorded; and I had the curiosity to look in to observe the style of the festival. I found the supper to consist of a good meat and vegetable soup, a dish of fine mullet out of the adjoining river, two large fowls, a piece of bacon, roast beef, a couple of wild ducks, and a plum pudding, accompanied by cauliflowers, French beans, and various productions of his garden, together with the delicious water-melon of the country; they had a reasonable

quantity of Cape wine with their meal, and closed their evening with punch and their pipes."

He gives it as his opinion later on that the transportation system is in need of revision.

"I would suggest," he says, "that a division of sentence into two classes be permitted at home—the first to be punishment of a far more lenient character than the others; that it consist of those who have erred from the impulse of want and poverty more than vice; that though prisoners be assigned they shall be distinguished from the felon class by a distinguishing badge or dress and shall not be liable to corporal punishment in the first instance, and only upon substantial complaint of misconduct; they be then reduced to the second and more degraded class, and be reassigned by Government, liable to the same method of treatment which prisoners now receive; but should parties so sent out behave themselves with propriety and industry for, say, twelve months, that every encouragement be given by the Home Parish sending out the wife and family and allowing the indulgence of the present ticket-of-leave."

He has something to say about the influence of religion.

"In the assignment of convicts every attention ought also to be paid to their religious creeds. There are many most respectable Roman Catholic and Presbyterian settlers; to these servants of the same faith ought, as much as possible, be conveyed, as holding out the best chance of efficient religious instruction."

Segenhoe was administered, so far as its convict servants were concerned, in a model fashion. The station had its own surgeon, as had two or three other large holdings on the Upper Hunter, and church ser-

vices were always held on Sundays. Macqueen discriminated strictly between his good-conduct men and those who habitually misbehaved. The former were permitted to build themselves small huts, in which they used to live in comparative comfort, but the bad lots were herded at night into a tunnel cut in a hillside, where living conditions were squalid, mainly owing to the prisoners' own disgusting habits.

Macqueen's treatment of his assigned servants offended other landed proprietors in New South Wales who dealt with the convicts allotted to them as workers, not infrequently, in a worse fashion than if they had been slaves. They made complaints about him in Sydney, so Sir Richard Bourke, the Governor, went to Segenhoe to see for himself what Potter Macqueen was doing. He spent a whole day on a high hill overlooking the headquarters of the station, whence he could see for himself most of the agricultural activities carried on in the vicinity of the homestead. The hill where he went to spy out the land is to this day known as "Bourke's look-out." Here is how the correspondent of "The Sydney Herald" describes the great occasion in that journal's issue of November 24, 1834:

"The Governor arrived at St. Helier's on Tuesday, 11th inst., and stopped with Mr. George Forbes for the night.

"On the following morning Mr. Macqueen, with his carriage and four, drove to St. Helier's, and brought his Excellency to Segenhoe. On reaching a certain point, where the first glimpse of Segenhoe is obtained, the carriage was met by twenty-six horsemen, including the overseer, headed by Dr. M'Creddie, the medical gentleman of the establishment, who joined his Excel-

lency's escort. On the carriage entering the great avenue, the speed of the *avant-courier* was checked by the immediate discharge of cannon, and the hoisting of the British flag in different positions. During the firing of the Royal salute, the carriage moved on, by his Excellency's desire, at a very slow pace through a line, on the one hand, of one hundred and forty-four working bullocks yoked up to eighteen iron ploughs, with drivers and ploughmen in new suits of clothing; and on the other hand, eighteen drays with shaft bullocks and their attendants; further on stood eight teams yoked up to harrows, scufflers, and other implements of husbandry; and opposite to these, eight pack bullocks with their packs, and loaded for the distant out-stations; farther in advance stood the native chief of Segenhoe with forty followers, painted in the most grotesque manner, carrying spears of twelve to fourteen feet long and other instruments of war, and eight blackboys, each holding a leash of kangaroo dogs.

"His Excellency passed on through the inner gate amidst the roaring of the cannon and the deafening cheers of the establishment, where Mr. Semphill was in waiting to receive him, to whom he expressed the very great pleasure he felt in viewing so unexpected a pageant in the wild bush, and which he, his Excellency, observed he would not soon forget.

"Two bullocks were presented to the Chiefs of Segenhoe and Waverley, and the evening was closed in by a grand corroboree. Thus far has Mr. Macqueen paid respect and done honour to the King in the person of his Representative. The Governor proceeds to the Liverpool Plains with Mr. Macqueen, Mr. Dow, and Lieutenant Bunbury this day."

His Excellency could see no reason for censuring Potter Macqueen—in fact, he departed from Segenhoe with regrets that there were not more men of his useful sort in the colony. He could hardly help comparing this model estate with Castle Forbes down the valley, where James Mudie was making life a hell for the unfortunates in his service. Apart from the success that attended Macqueen's efforts as an agriculturalist and grazier, his treatment of his assigned servants entitles him to the highest credit. When prisoners were assigned to humane and enlightened employers of his sort their lot was far from being a bad one and they came to render real service to the country of their compulsory adoption. Their condition was, indeed, very much better than that of the farm labourers and factory hands they had left behind them in the Old Country.

Stories which may or may not be true, as mentioned in the previous chapter, have attached themselves as a sort of legend on the Upper Hunter to Mrs. Potter Macqueen. However much of truth may have been in them, it seems to be the fact that this good man's efforts as a pioneer were greatly hampered by her indifference to his very noble ideals and her distaste for life in the Australian bush. There is probably some foundation of fact for the tradition that she finally deserted him. She doesn't seem to have been nearly good enough for that valuable man.

Chapter XXII

THE RAID ON SCONE

AS in other parts of New South Wales in the first half of the nineteenth century, bushranging had its day in the Hunter Valley, and the most notorious gang of runaway convict bandits which levied toll upon the pioneer community in the districts lying between Wallis Plains (West Maitland) and Murrurundi, near the head of the Page River, was the party led by Edward Davis, better known as "The Jewboy."

Edward Davis (*alias* Wilkinson), who was only twenty-six years of age at the time of his execution in 1841, made his escape from an iron-gang in the Sydney district, took to the bush, and was presently joined by a desperate character, an Irishman known by the name of Ruggy, and two other absconding prisoners. They made northward into the country lying between the lower reaches of the Hawkesbury and the Hunter, where they picked up three more recruits.

After a little while the gang managed to arm itself with double-barrelled guns and pistols, and its equipment of stolen horseflesh was excellent. For a long time they carried on in the district in which they had begun their operations—occasionally going further afield—and were able to defy all efforts to capture them on the

part of the detachments of mounted police stationed in the district. The gang committed so many robberies in a little over twelve months that the authorities in Sydney began to realise that something in the nature of a special expedition against them would be necessary. So a strong body of mounted troopers, under a subaltern's command, was sent to the Brisbane Water district, with instructions to hunt the gang relentlessly and capture its members either dead or alive. But although the Sydney contingent pushed them hard, it could not bring them to a final reckoning. Nevertheless, it succeeded in forcing them northward into the Hunter River country.

They looted stores and dwellings all over the Valley, and in due course turned up at Muswellbrook, where they raided another store before going on to the neighbouring settlement at Holdsworthy Plains (Scone). Here they put up at one of the inns in the township—Chiver's—and afterwards set out to levy toll upon the local citizenry. Up to this time they were innocent of bloodshed, as Davis had insisted upon a "no murder" policy, and would only permit of fighting in order to evade arrest.

A little more than twenty years ago, an Upper Hunter newspaper, "The Scone Advocate," printed the evidence taken at the inquest on the body of a young man they murdered at Scone, followed by that recorded at the subsequent police court proceedings, and the testimony given at the coronial inquiry is quoted from the issue of that journal for August 20, 1920. It was one of a series of highly interesting local historical articles. Thus it goes:—

"At Scone and within the lock-up there, this 21st

day of December, 1840, in the presence of J. A. Robertson, Esq., Police Magistrate and acting Coroner; at the inquest held on the body of John Graham, late storekeeper to Thomas Dangar.

“Appeared James Juchau, saddler to Mr. Thomas Dangar, and working at his place, who being sworn deposes: That about 7 o'clock this morning deponent had just sat down to work in his own room behind Mr. Dangar's store when he saw several men on horseback arrive at the public house, and immediately afterwards one of the number came riding into the yard and called—

“‘Cook, Cook, come out here!’

“From the wild appearance of the man, deponent called out to a man beside him named Mills that they were bushrangers, and deponent then jumped up and put on his hat and made his escape, followed by Mills, through a broken part of the fence, and made his way to the blacksmith's shop and told the blacksmith that there were bushrangers at the store. That as deponent was leaving Mr. Dangar's yard, as just stated, he heard the report of firearms—two reports, one following the other very quickly.

“That after leaving the blacksmith's place and before getting to the road on his way to inform the police, he saw the deceased running along the road. Then he began to walk and again began to run and stagger, and just as deponent got close to him the deceased fell. That after falling he looked up in deponent's face very pitifully and said—

“‘They have shot me; I am a dead man.’

“That upon this he observed a man riding up with a

blunderbuss, or fowling-piece, holding in his hand, and said to deponent—

“ ‘Come back, or I’ll blow your brains out.’ ”

“Graham was quite sensible at the time, and the bushranger ordered him also to come back. That Graham answered that they had shot him right through, and that he was not able to come back; and deponent then saw the blood come out of deceased’s mouth. That the bushranger then marched deponent, accompanied with Mills, back until they came to the blacksmith’s fence, when the bushranger told deponent and Mills to stop until he got the blacksmith and his mate, and for that purpose the bushranger rode up to the blacksmith’s place and called those within out, and put them along with deponent and Mills and marched them down to a tree opposite Mr. Dangar’s store.

“That after remaining guarded by one of the party for about five minutes in a state of great alarm, deponent saw the ruffians come out of the store and another part of them come out of Chiver’s public house and mount their horses and ride off along the high road towards the Page. That they were seven in number, and to the best of deponent’s belief, all armed. That as soon as the bushrangers were gone deponent, Mills, and some others went down to where Graham was lying and found that he was just alive, but quite insensible, and he died a few minutes afterwards.

“Dr. Isaac Haig, district surgeon, being sworn, deposes: That deponent was called upon this morning at about 8 o’clock to see a man said to have been shot by the bushrangers. That on arriving at Scone, deponent found a man named John Graham lying on the road quite dead, having apparently been so for about an

hour, from the state of the body. That on examining the body about an hour after his arrival, in the presence and by direction of the Police Magistrate, deponent found a wound in the back about a couple of inches on the left side of the spine, apparently caused by a gunshot wound. That there had been very little external hemorrhage. On proceeding to open the body, the deponent found that the shot had passed right through the cavity of the chest, making its exit between the third and fourth ribs of the left side. The head was uninjured, but from the immense quantity of blood in the chest, and the rapidity of his death, it is evident that some of the larger blood vessels must have been injured. Deponent was not able to discover the ball, which was probably lodged under the muscles of the chest, nor was it considered necessary to make further search for it. Deponent's opinion is that the man died from internal hemorrhage, the consequence of the gun-shot wound.

"William Day, cook to Mr. Chivers, publican, who, being sworn, deposes: That this morning about 7 o'clock, when the bushrangers attacked the public house, the deponent was in the back yard when he observed the deceased running from Dangar's store and one of the bushrangers running after him, who pursued him 20 yards and then fired a piece at deceased, who appeared to witness to be shot from his bending his knees at the moment the piece was fired. Deceased continued running for about forty yards, pursued by the bushranger, who then fired a second time at the deceased. That the bushranger then returned to the public house and sent another bushranger on horseback

after deceased, and that the latter shortly afterwards returned and was asked by one of his mates if that man was all right, when the other answered that he was."

Events moved very rapidly after that, for two days later, Mr. Robertson, the Police Magistrate, heard the charge against six of the gang, including its leader, Edward Davis, of having murdered Graham. In the meantime they had been captured at a place known as Doughboy Hollow, just over the Liverpool Range above Murrurundi, and brought back to Scone to appear before the local bench. The evidence given at these preliminary proceedings was much the same as that brought forward at the inquest, with the testimony of a few additional witnesses. The hearing, at the request of Mr. Edward Denny Day, the Police Magistrate at Maitland, who had pursued them up the valley and effected their capture at the end of the day on which Graham was murdered, was adjourned to Muswellbrook, whence their committal eventually took place to the Criminal Court in Sydney.

The men charged were John Marshall ("Clydesdale," 1832); James Everett ("Mangles," 1832); John Shae ("Calcutta," 1827); Edward Davis, *alias* Wilkinson ("Camden," 1833); Robert Chitty ("Sophia," 1829) and Richard Glanville ("Lord Lyndoch," 1838). The names and figures in brackets are those of the convict transports that brought them to Australia and the dates when each of them arrived in the country.

When you stand upon the summit of the pass by which the Great Northern Road crosses the main range, you are on the division of the two parts of New South Wales, the coastal and the western, and down below, looking towards the sunset, is Doughboy Hollow, now,

by some stupidity of the civil service, officially labelled "Ardglen." But it is still Doughboy Hollow to those who, like the writer, knew it before this idiotic change was made.

This re-entrant gulf in the western slope of the range seems to have earned its original name because the old-time carriers—bullock-drivers and horse-team conductors—used to boil the succulent and indigestible dough-boy, or dumpling, there, with the leg-o'-mutton, when they camped above the pretty creek that tinkles through it at the end of their day's pilgrimage towards the coast. Many of the names within a hundred miles radius are curiously happy—though there is not room here to enter into explanation of their origins. There are Bother Jimmy Mountain, Who'd-ha'-thought-it, Come-by-Chance, Campo Santo station and many others.

On December 27, 1840, "The Sydney Herald" published the following news item from its correspondent in Scone, which tells of the doings of the gang on the 21st, when they were being chased northward from the vicinity of Muswellbrook by Denny Day and a commando of police and inhabitants of the Hunter Valley. Day was an old Peninsula veteran of field rank, and his district as a Police Magistrate (Maitland) extended from Port Macquarie to Muswellbrook. The hunt on this occasion had led him far outside the bounds of his own official district, but that didn't matter much to him when he had a congenial job in hand. The "Herald's" description of the events with which we are here concerned is a quaint sample of the journalism of that distant day.

"The Rubicon is past," it reads, "and human blood

is again shed by one of the most lawless gangs of bushrangers that ever infested the Hunter. Blood cries aloud for retribution at the hands of our vacillating government. Blood—yes, blood—the first of a long list which it is anticipated will mark the career of the Hunter River bushrangers. My last letter feebly related the career of this gang at the Wollombi, of their assault on the late Constable M'Dougall, and the murderous attack on one of Mr. Crawford's men; of their *rencontre* at the Red House; and other particulars of their misdeeds. This, though not so full of particulars, will be more full of horror. It appears that on leaving the Wollombi, they were joined by six others, thus making their number 10, when they proceeded to Scone, simultaneously attacking the inn of Mrs. Chivers and the store of Mr. Thomas Dangar; their approach, however, was observed by a young man, clerk to Mr. Dangar, named Graham, who injudiciously armed himself with a pistol, which he fired at the advancing party, when one of them (Marshall, it is thought), levelled his gun and shot him dead at the door of his master's house, whose property he was defending. Davis, the chief of the robbers, on hearing the report, came forward; he seemed to regret it much, but I will quote his own words: 'I would give a thousand pounds that this had not happened, but as well a hundred now as one.' We may, therefore, expect that this one murder is the precursor of others, each more sanguinary than the others."

It was a miserable business. The young assistant-storekeeper was a good specimen of the better sort of free immigrant who was beginning to arrive in this country, and it was over his body that the forthright

Denny Day made some unpleasant remarks about his brother Police Magistrate at Scone and the timorous inhabitants of the town. To him and to them he applied in equal measure an unambiguous accusation of cowardice.

Day wasted no time. He led his party up the valley of the Kingdon Ponds, past the Burning Mountain at Wingen, over Warland's Range and down into the valley of the Page River. About 5 p.m. his little force arrived at Atkinson's Inn at Murrurundi—for many years known as The White Hart—to find that his quarry was only about forty minutes ahead of him. The bushrangers had helped themselves to the fresh horses they found in the stables of the hotel and had gone on towards the ranges at the head of the Page valley.

By this time Day's contingent had ridden 43 miles since early morning. He accordingly allowed a halt of ten minutes so that the horses might be watered and his men refreshed with a drink or two. Then they rode through the town, and up the valley to the pass across the ranges. When, after sunset, they looked down into Doughboy Hollow and saw the men they were after preparing to camp for the night, they had ridden in chase of them for at least 50 miles!

The fight that took place immediately was short and sharp, and all the bushrangers were captured except one—although, curiously enough no one on either side was badly hurt. And here is its inevitable sequel, taken from "The Sydney Herald" of March 17, 1841:

"The gang of ruffians recently convicted in the Supreme Court of bushranging and murder . . . paid the forfeit of their lives on the scaffold in the rear of

Sydney Gaol yesterday. The malefactors were all transported felons from the Mother Country, and their names, ages, etc., were as follows:—Edward Davis, 26, arrived in 1833, per ship "Camden"; Robert Chitty, 37, arrived in 1829, per "Sophia"; James Everett, 25, arrived in 1832, per "Mangles"; John Marshall, 27, arrived in 1832, per "Clyde"; Richard Glanville, 31, arrived in 1831, per "Lord Lyndoch"; and John Shae, 27, arrived in 1837, per "Calcutta." . . . At ten past nine the culprits were strongly pinioned and conducted from the cells to the area in front of the drop, where they all knelt down. . . . All the culprits (if we except Everett) deeply lamented their having committed the crimes for which they were about to die, and acknowledged the justice of their sentences. . . . The ropes were speedily adjusted, and the white caps drawn over the faces of the wretched criminals. In the short interval which elapsed before the withdrawal of the fatal bolt, Marshall and Glanville were engaged in loud and apparently fervent prayer, and we observed the culprit Davis (who was attired in a suit of mourning), thank the Jewish minister for the attention paid to him in his last moments. The struggles of all the men were of short duration. The immense crowd dispersed peaceably. It will be remembered that these men were apprehended chiefly through the active exertions of Mr. Day, Police Magistrate, Maitland."

Chapter XXIII

BELLTREES

OF all the old time estates on the Upper Hunter the most notable for generations has been Belltrees, the magnificent station controlled for more than eighty years past by members of the White family—men who rank as notably as any in the pioneering of the Hunter Valley, and, indeed, of New South Wales. For almost a century and a quarter of the Hunter's history the name "White" has been connected with its records, and there is such a numerous clan still existing in the district that nothing short of alien conquest would seem likely to remove it from the position it occupies in its relations with the Valley.

The Australian founder of the family, James White, came to the colony in 1825 in charge of a consignment of merino sheep for the Australian Agricultural Company. On September 23, 1839, having severed his connection with the A.A. Co., he was given a Crown grant of 1,280 acres at the junction of the Isis and Page Rivers, since known as the Gundy Estate—as previously noted, the original form of the name seems to have been Gunda Gunda. James White was the father of the Hon. James White, of racing fame, of H. C. White, Frank White and four other sons, all of them more or less connected with the family tradition of flocks and herds.

But the founder of Belltrees was Henry Collins Sempill, already mentioned in these pages in connection with Potter Macqueen and Segenhoe. He was born in Scotland in 1794, and was the son of Hamilton Collins of Bonaw, and heir by will to the estates of his grand uncle, Robert Sempill, of Castlebarns, Edinburgh, provided he assumed the name of Sempill. The will also stipulated that the estate of Castlebarns remain in the family of the Belltrees Sempills, but in 1818 it was otherwise disposed of.

About nine years later Sempill came with his family to New South Wales, and settled in the Hunter Valley. In 1831 he received a grant of land on the Hunter River, which he named "Belltrees," and, having acquired the necessary experience, he devoted his time to the raising of stock there. Notwithstanding considerable additions to his grant of 2,560 acres in both freehold and lease, he found it desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to look for fresh pastures elsewhere, and learning from Oxley's "Journal," and probably from the explorer himself, of the well-grassed Hamilton Valley on the Upper Apsley River in the New England country, he occupied it.

In 1831 he was appointed General Manager of Thomas Potter Macqueen's Segenhoe estate, which had been founded and managed by Macqueen's agent, Peter Macintyre, up to that date.

He returned to Scotland in 1842, partly with a view to "procuring the emigration of shepherds from the Highlands" of that country, but learning of the continued decline in the pastoral industry of the colony, he instructed his agent to dispose of his interests in New South Wales. His property, as advertised for sale

in "The Sydney Herald" of March, 1844, consisted of his "station in New England, called Walca (Walcha) and Dungowan Creek, also the stock running at Ellers-ton, Belltrees, Aberfoyle, Long-flat and Horndale." These last properties, all within the settlement area, appear to have been disposed of privately.

Sempill, although a man of ability and evidently honourable in his transactions, was a somewhat imperious and overbearing character, tactless in his attitude towards his fellow settlers, which deprived him of the popularity his attainments and personality should have commanded.

Its original owner made an exchange of Belltrees for other properties with W. C. Wentworth. In 1848 Wentworth leased the estate to Messrs. J. F. and H. White, and in June, 1853, they purchased it from him. The new owners subsequently added to Belltrees the adjoining station of Ellerston, running to the head waters of the Hunter, and Waverley, situated on the Isis and Page Rivers. Belltrees was a celebrated pastoral holding even before the Whites acquired it. In the early eighteen-forties—when W. C. Wentworth owned it—it is on record that 180,000 sheep were shorn there, being brought from Cassilis, Kickerbill, Coolah, Gammon Plains and other stations to be washed and shorn. At that time wool was always washed on the sheep's back, and facilities for washing were particularly good at Belltrees.

Thirty years ago Belltrees contained an area of 160,000 acres of secured land, but sales in the meantime have reduced the total to something less than 100,000 acres. The country consists of small river and creek flats backed by abruptly rising ridges, which lead

up to the higher spurs or offshoots of the Main, or Liverpool, Range. The land towards the head of the creeks is rough, and was originally covered with a dense growth of timber, which has gradually been killed off by ringbarking. Some of the small flats are formed of the richest soil, and are well adapted for lucerne growing. They have been extensively used for this purpose.

The lower lands have been found more suitable for cattle, whilst the higher are devoted to sheep; the basalt country, occurring at a height of about 2,500 feet, is eminently favourable to the production of high-class merino wool. These high lands are covered with good natural grasses right to their summits, which run up to 4,000 feet; the whole estate carrying stock equal to a sheep to the acre in all seasons.

The country has proved itself wonderfully suited to merino wool production, and the high quality of the wool produced bears constant testimony to this fact. The Belltrees clip was formerly sold in London, but has for many years now been offered in Sydney, and has always commanded high values, on more than one occasion obtaining the season's record price. In early days the wool obtained a high reputation for its length, quality and "soft handling." It was specially sought after by the world's buyers. In 1880, 18½d. was reached for 54 bales—this being the highest price obtained for Belltrees wool up to that time. However, in September, 1916, during a war-time wool boom, Belltrees wool sold in Sydney to 23½d. per lb. in the grease for 31 bales.

The firm of H. E. A. and V. White, which has owned Belltrees for many years, took over the estate in 1889. The partners were H. L. White, W. E. White,

A. G. White and Victor White, who were the sons of the late Francis White, of Edinglassie, Muswellbrook. He was a son of the original James White, the owner of Edinglassie and Timor—the man who brought the merino sheep out for the A.A. Company in 1825.

In the tumbled ranges of the Upper Hunter there are many high peaks and quite respectable hills. It is a rough country with a jagged skyline, and much of it may be fallen "off" rather than "down." Great indigo humps of mountains that look like the backs of sleeping camels, or elephants, stand out against the orange of the dawn. Sharply-cut pinnacles, with uniform curves of slope, pierce the blue sky in the glare of midday. Under the glittering stars, long black ramparts wall the wide glens and the narrow. It is a land of climbing and descending, of great rises and little rises, broad valleys and steep-sided ravines, and a thousand patterns upon the excrescences of this whirling globe we live on. Mount Murulla, Tingaroo, Mount Dangar, Mount Royal—you may see each of them from the summit of each—are mighty and stately guardians of the landscape, standing like big blue policemen in the crowded mob of mountains. But there is none of them so big, so stately, and so massively dignified as the mighty mound of Woolloomaa, looming magnificently over the lovely valley in which Belltrees lies.

When the writer last saw Belltrees it seemed to him that it might almost be described as the perfect example of the perfect station. It is fifteen years since the great man who made the old station what it is passed away—the late H. L. White—but the place that was his life's work will always remain an abiding memorial to the man so affectionately nicknamed in the district, "The

King of the Upper Hunter."

There is nothing of exaggeration in writing in this way about Belltrees. But you must know something of stations, either to say such a thing or to be able to appreciate its truth for yourself. You must have seen them in many sorts and sizes. If you have, and you should ever come to travel up the Hunter towards its sources, and pass through the many miles of Belltrees—or that once belonged to it, for much of the big run has been alienated in recent years—you will recognise the fact that this fine holding as nearly attains a pastoral ideal as it is possible for any place to do. You will discover nothing wrong with it—from gate-fastenings to woolshed, from boundary-riders' cottages to sheep-yards, from the station store to the harvesting machinery. The Whites of the Hunter Valley have all been remarkable for a certain sort of genius in station-management, but it is safe to say that in none of them has this genius been so evident as in the late H. L. White, who had the great estate under his control, in association with his brothers, for over forty years.

Perhaps there is no better view to be had of Woolloomaa than from the head station at Belltrees. Five miles away, in a more or less easterly direction, its high mass towers solidly into the sky. It is a flat-topped kop, something like Table Mountain, behind Cape Town, and a sheer precipice near the summit gives it, also, a resemblance to Mount Wellington in Tasmania. Looking at it from Belltrees you are just far enough away to get its true perspective, but unless you stand upon another of the heights in the surrounding ranges—say, on Mount Murulla, twenty-five miles away at Wingen—you will not be best able to realise its relative size in

ST. ANTON
"PAPER" CHILL



“Newcastle”



"Hunter II"

[See Page 77]

comparison with its brother mountains in this part of New South Wales. The top of Murulla is 4,171 feet above sea level, and Woolloomaa is about 1,000 feet higher. But it is a bigger, more massive mountain than Murulla, irrespective of height, because it has a broader base and a wider top. In every way it is more burly.

When the writer ascended the mountain over a score of years ago, he drove in a motor-car along a bush road to a spot near the foot of the great mound, where a selector on Belltrees waited to ride with him, and show him the way to the top. It was a pleasure to make the ascent of the big mountain in the company of such a fine specimen of the Hunter River native as Donald McPhee, and it was evident that he thought as much of the Belltrees people as they did of him. Such relations between "cocky" and squatter are only too rare in these days—but they usedn't to be so uncommon in this part of the world as elsewhere.

Woolloomaa is easy to climb—on the back of a good horse. You may ride the whole way up—unless you wish to look out from the north-eastern corner, which is a few hundred feet higher than the general level of the summit. For many years the mountain has been a forest reserve, and has never been ringbarked, so that there is not so much of the dead timber lying about its spurs and slopes that makes present-day mountain riding a more difficult business than it used to be. After a long experience of Mount Murulla, the ascent of Woolloomaa seemed almost like a saunter in a park.

We climbed an easily rising spur that led us up to the left of the basalt precipice—the position of the "Organ Pipes" of Mount Wellington—that stands out on the western face of Woolloomaa, like a dark scar,

below the crest. And then we came out on the edge of the mountain—and one almost gasped at the grandeur, beauty and immensity of the view. One has been on higher mountains, and has looked down on the world from aeroplanes that were considerably more elevated than 5,000 feet, but never had one seen a prospect more to his liking. That might have been, of course, because one knew the surrounding country well, and seemed to be enjoying the recognition of old friends in many peaks and heights that stood up out of the chaotic ranges against the clear blue of the sky. But it was, indeed, a noble outlook.

To the west and the south and the north the prospect is a very wide one. The most distant skylines are, maybe, a hundred miles away, and in between lies a beautiful and varied countryside. Singleton, Muswellbrook, Aberdeen, Scone, Murrurundi—though not all actually visible—are easily located. The courses of the Hunter and half a score of its tributaries are readily discernible. Immediately below lie the rich lands of Belltrees, and from the top of Woolloomaa it is most possible to realise what a splendid place it is.

On the southern end of the wide plateau there occurs a curious and interesting botanical feature. A forest of tall stringybarks grows near the edge of the mountain, and it is made up of a variety that is found only in one other place in New South Wales, down to the Monaro. They are Tasmanian stringybarks—tall and noble trees that overtop the local specimens of their kind by scores of feet. The reason for their being here is probably that at this elevation they find a climate resembling that of their own southern island. For even on a hot day the top of Woolloomaa is as cool and fresh as you

will find the climate in the valleys of the Derwent and the Tamar. Excepting Kosciusko, and one or two of his mates, there are no higher mountains in New South Wales than the big fellow who stands guard over Belltrees.

It is sometimes the case that objects of the greatest interest to visitors to any locality are not regarded as being in any way impressive by those who have always lived close at hand to them. The writer has encountered Cockneys who have never been inside Westminster Abbey or the Tower of London. There are plenty of people in Sydney who have never seen the Jenolan Caves—doubtless, there are a good many who live on the Blue Mountains themselves who have not troubled to go across and take a look at them. Proximity and familiarity with the tradition that they have always been handy, and always will be, accounts for such neglect of things that outsiders travel expensively many miles to behold. They are available at any time. It is a variation of the proverb about a prophet having no honour in his own country, but means the same thing. However, such is not the case with Mount Woolloomaa.

Everybody in the Upper Hunter district takes a pride in the big mountain. Most people can pick it out, as it looms above its fellows, from any point from which it is visible. It cannot be said to be neglected by the people who live close beside it, although many of them may never have climbed to its summit and enjoyed the splendid prospect it is possible to behold therefrom. It has all the local honour it could desire if it were a sentient entity. And for proof of this, witness the Seal of the Shire of the Upper Hunter. It is nothing more nor less than a picture of Mount Woolloomaa.

Chapter XXIV

KINGDON PONDS

JUST below the old town of Scone, near the top of the Valley, a beautiful she-oak shaded rivulet empties itself into the Hunter River, after meandering down a fertile vale which has its upper end in Warland's Range—the long spur of Mount Murulla running eastward from the great mountain which dominates all the scenery of this part of the world, as Woolloomaa does that of the main river at and about Belltrees, twenty-five miles away in a south-easterly direction.

It is one of those water-hole-and-rapid streamlets that are such characteristic features of the rough country through which the tributary valleys of the Upper Hunter approach the main one—too small to be called a river, but just large enough to be a typical Australian creek in mountainous country. Its charms, and those of the lands through which it flows, are obvious to all who go that way. But it has a place, also, in the pioneering of the Commonwealth that entitles it to more than passing notice.

As we have already seen in previous chapters, when the first pioneers from the Hawkesbury crossed the ranges separating the watersheds of that river and the Hunter in March, 1820, and came down on to Patrick's

Plains—of which rich area of land the town of Singleton is the civic centre—they opened up a new tract of country to settlement which was not long in being occupied. Already the march of civilisation had progressed as far up the Hunter as the district of Wallis Plains (Maitland), and in the course of a few years the wide valley lying between the Wollombi Ranges and the mountainous country northward of them began to be occupied by cattle stations and sheep runs.

Some famous old-time holdings came into existence, of which such estates as Castle Forbes, Ravensworth, St. Helier's, Segenhoe and Belltrees were representative. Muswellbrook got itself established as a district centre, and before long Scone became the outpost of Government of the country on the lower side of the Liverpool Range. Page's River, which was the first name by which the settlement of Murrurundi was generally referred to, was the ultimate outpost. Over the range above that pretty town nestling in its lovely valley, lay the No Man's Land of the vast plains extending away to the north and north-west.

The summit of the Divide marked the boundary, in this part of the country, of the Nineteen Counties, outside the limits of which all those who occupied the land and depastured herds and flocks of cattle and sheep, were supposed to do so entirely at their own risk, and without the help and protection of Government. The pioneers might obtain licences to take up runs out there, but it was carefully impressed upon their understandings by the authorities in Sydney that they must rely altogether upon themselves for protection against whatever dangers threatened—the chief of which were the depredations of the aborigines and

the lawless activities of the early class of bushrangers recruited from the runaway convicts who had absconded from their assigned service with the landholders of the Hunter.

The track that led to this out-back country left the main valley of the Hunter near Scone, and followed the course of the Kingdon Ponds northward towards Mount Murulla. Through the narrowing plain of the valley at the mouth of which is situated Scone, it ran more or less beside the left bank of the creek, until it crossed the low range that divides the Kingdon Ponds from the watershed of the Page. Up a narrow gully under the big mountain's main spur it climbed over Warland's Range, and every settler, every head of horned stock, every sheep, and every hundredweight of supplies had to come this way. It was the first of the two gates—the other was at the summit of the main range—leading into the Liverpool Plains, and across them to the New England tableland and the country then vaguely described officially as "The Moreton Bay Territory," which is now Queensland. The Kingdon Ponds, for a distance of about 15 miles in a straight line from its mouth to its source, was the highway along which civilisation found its way to the northward of New South Wales, or, rather, to that part of the State which lies to the westward of the Great Dividing Range in the northern half of its area. And this is where the pretty, winding streamlet finds its place in Australian history. To the men and women who passed along that way more than a hundred years ago, it was a good deal more important, even, than it is to-day to those who have inherited the rich lands

through which it winds its picturesque way towards the Tasman Sea.

There is some vagueness as to the origin of the name "Kingdon Ponds," but the most probable explanation of it is that the stream was so called after an early settler on it named Kingdon, and that the "Ponds" part of it refers to its appearance in a time of drought when white men first became acquainted with it and its waterholes were unconnected—much in the same fashion that the famous old coaching inn standing on the Valley road between Muswellbrook and Singleton was referred to as "Chain-o'-Ponds." Whatever may be the case, however, the principal fame of the Valley lies in the fact that near its head is situated the only burning mountain in Australia.

On March 19, 1828, in the newspaper which had not long been established by W. C. Wentworth and Dr. Wardell—"The Australian"—there appears a news item which in these days would undoubtedly partake of the nature of a journalistic "scoop."

"A volcano," it read, "has just been discovered in the vicinity of Hunter's River. It is situated among the mountains at the distance of about 100 miles in a north-westerly direction from Newcastle—12 miles beyond Houldsworthy's Plains, and 14 miles from Segenhoe. The distance of the volcano from the sea is calculated to be about 90 miles. Of the existence of the phenomenon there can be no doubt. It has been visited by several persons. . . . When discovered the volcano emitted a brilliant light, and had every appearance of being long in a state of activity. It is thought that it has not hitherto claimed particular observation on account of its resemblance, at a distance,

to the sight which is frequently witnessed in various parts of the colony, and to its being mistaken for deep grass on fire."

Naturally enough, this paragraph has pride of place in the columns of "The Australian," and must easily have been one of the most startling journalistic announcements ever made in Sydney.

There is no doubt now as to its origin. The man who first saw the smoke from Mount Wingen ascending into the blue sky above the wooded ranges on the north-eastern side of the upper end of the Valley of the Kingdon Ponds was Dr. Little, of Cressfield, a holding which lies a trifle more than half way between Scone and Wingen.

He was out hunting, one day in 1826, with some blackfellows, in the country to the northward of his station, and saw smoke rising from a hillside on the north-eastern slopes of the valley. The blacks who were with him told the Doctor that it came from a burning mountain which they called "Wingen." ("Wingen," in those parts, is the native name for "fire.")

On the news reaching Sydney and being printed in "The Australian," a Mr. Mackie, of Cockle Bay (Darling Harbour), became greatly interested, and, together with his partner, Mr. Dixon, equipped an expedition to investigate the supposed "volcano." On July 30 of the same year "The Australian" printed a long report from the leader of the expedition, under the heading, "The Volcano." This is the first—and easily the most foolish—account of Mount Wingen, and it was copied into the October issue of "The Australian Quarterly Review," whose editor, the Rev.

C. P. N. Wilton, himself a geologist of ability, subsequently made the first scientific investigation of the place. At the beginning of 1829 he went up the Hunter to see it for himself, and in a communication to "The Sydney Gazette" of March 10, 1829, he ridicules the idea of there being anything volcanic about it. He takes up three columns of the "Gazette" to do this, but does it very interestingly and convincingly.

In December, 1831, while on his expedition out into the Liverpool Plains country in search of a supposed navigable river—the Kindur—Sir Thomas Mitchell investigated Mount Wingen as he passed up the valley. He camped a little below the present site of the village of Wingen, on a fine waterhole in the Kingdon Ponds—probably on what is now the Cliffdale estate—and his description, together with that of Mr. Wilton, fixes the exact position of the fire when the burning mountain first became known to white men, 116 years ago. The date on the plan survey which illustrates his observations is "1829," so presumably he had visited the place before, not long after it had been discovered by Dr. Little.

"Wingen, the aboriginal name," he says, "is derived from fire. The combustion extends over a space of no great extent near to the summit of a group of hills forming part of a low chain which divides the Valley of the Kingdon Ponds from that of Page's River. The blue smoke ascends from vents and cracks, the breadth of the widest measuring about a yard. Red heat appears at the depth of about four fathoms. No marks of any extensive change appear at the surface near these burning fissures, although the growth of large trees in old cracks in the opposite slopes, where ignition

has ceased, shows that the fire has continued for a very considerable time, or that the same thing had occurred at a much earlier period."

In the old days this country was cattle country, but up here at the head of the Kingdon Ponds Valley, the cattle days are gone for ever. The beasts of a herd receive more "spoon feeding" than they used to get eighty or ninety years ago. The holdings are all fenced, the runs paddocked, and the saleyards only a dozen miles away, or, if they are further off, the railway carries stock to them safely and expeditiously.

No more do all hands attend the big musters, camping out for weeks along the rivers and in the ranges, whilst the work of sorting out the different station brands as carried on the cattle goes on. There are no wild cattle running in the inaccessible fastnesses of the ranges, and the brumbies have all gone, too. The mountain sides are still steep, and the gullies deep and rugged, and fine horsemanship is called for on occasion; but there is nothing to-day like that which was the pride of the old hands. Horsemanship then was a necessity—now it is an accomplishment.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies of the last century the country in the Upper Hunter started to be stocked with sheep, and everywhere wire fencing began to divide and block the open territory that used to stretch, free of artificial hindrance, almost from Port Stephens to the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was a period of change that utterly altered the whole spirit of the countryside.

In place of the wide, inter-related life of the old cattle stations, the somewhat parochial interests of the sheep men rendered the bush more a place of routine and hard toil than it had been in the old days,

when practically all the work of the average pastoral establishment was confined to musterings and brandings, and the droving of fat stock to distant markets.

The boundary-riders took the place of the stockmen. All the old conditions retreated further back, or out into the newly pioneered country in Queensland. Save in a few cases, all the cattle men became sheep men, and the shearer became a power in the land.

With Sir John Robertson's "free selection before survey," most of the big stations in these parts were broken up, and, undoubtedly to the benefit of the country at large, the small man came to stay.

But to us of the present generation those old days must ever be invested with an atmosphere of romance that is not so easily discoverable in these of Shire Councils and Pasture Protection Boards. Without too much of the praise of times past, it is impossible not to feel that they were wider, freer, pleasanter times than these. The coaches rolled leisurely to the seaboard, little steam packets of a few hundred tons almost drifted down to Sydney; along the roads were good inns, conducted upon Old Country principles, and travel was a process in which time was of the smallest account.

Everyone knew everyone else in the district—there was a spirit of good-fellowship abroad in the land. These days are reckoned democratic in Australia, but there was a truer democracy in the old bush life than will ever come again in the Commonwealth. As the hearty freedom of the bush is in contrast now with the conventions and restrictions of the city, so is present-day country life in contrast with that of a couple of generations ago.

The valley to the right of Scone, leading up to the

source of the Hunter in the high tableland where the Manning and the Namoi also find their beginnings, is the real Hunter Valley, but it was along the Kingdon Ponds that the tide of progress and settlement in northern New South Wales ebbed and flowed up and down the Great North Road until the coming of the Iron Horse, in the 'sixties and 'seventies of the last century, definitely established the track beside the little murmuring brook as one of the main trade routes of Australasia.

The big estates of the cattle men began to be divided into farms and small holdings, whose multiplication along the valley of the Hunter and those of its tributaries meant the settlement of a permanent and progressive population in the fruitful territories that had formerly been but inadequately used in the more or less haphazard grazing of comparative handfuls of cattle and sheep. The tiny village settlements grew into considerable towns. Dairying began to take the place of grazing. And now, instead of the oak-lined windings of the Kingdon Ponds, meandering through the unfenced areas of old St. Aubin's Station, the pretty creek twists and turns down the valley between prosperous farmsteads and thriving agricultural establishments. In the churchyards at Muswellbrook, Scone and Murrurundi, across Warland's Range, lie the bones of the men and women who first came up the creek, and helped to make British Australasia. Their memory lies in every bend and in every tree-shaded waterhole of the Kingdon Ponds, and the sighing winds, murmuring through the she-oaks that line its fertile banks, whisper the stories of their useful lives.

Chapter XXV

MOUNT WINGEN

IN the previous chapter, describing the Valley of the Kingdon Ponds, passing reference was made to the Burning Mountain at Wingen, but as this curious geological "freak" is unique in Australia, if not in the world—there is something similar, on a much smaller scale, in England—a book about the Hunter Valley can hardly do without a chapter entirely devoted to Mount Wingen. And, inevitably, something personal to the writer and his people must come into it, for ever since 1838 some of the clan have been living round and about the 800-foot hill that has long possessed the courtesy title of "Mount." When the huge bulk of Mount Murulla opposite (4,171 feet) is contrasted with Mount Wingen, it is almost possible to regard the immediate neighbourhood of the Burning Mountain as flat country—which it isn't by any means, as you'd find out if you assisted to muster the Burning Mountain Paddock of the old Glengarry run for cattle or sheep.

John Kingsmill Abbott—his brand was JKA—the writer's grandfather, bought 350 acres of land at Wingen, within about a mile of the Burning Mountain, in 1838. He afterwards leased Glengarry Station on the Page River, and when he died in 1847 his widow,

Frances Amanda Abbott, carried it on as her own property with the assistance of an old Irish ex-convict stockman named Terence McMahon—legends of whom, as “Old Mac,” still survive in the Wingen neighbourhood. “Mac” lived in his old age at Glengarry, honoured and respected, and maybe a little feared, by those whom he had worked with and for faithfully and well for more than a generation. A tough, indomitable Irishman, with a hot temper and a hotter vocabulary—his body was found just inside the boundary of the adjoining Waverly Station, whither he had ridden at the age of 80 odd to get some of his horses after a muster, in 1878.

When he arrived at manhood, the late W. E. Abbott, second son of John Kingsmill, took over the management of the station, and, until his death at the age of 81 in 1924, lived close beside the Burning Mountain at Glengarry, Wingen and Murulla. Unquestionably, he was *the* authority on it, and will presently be quoted on it pretty extensively. The writer knows a good deal about the place himself, but nothing compared with the knowledge of it possessed by his uncle.

It will be remembered that Mr. Mackie, of Cockle Bay (Darling Harbour), organised an expedition to investigate Mount Wingen after “The Australian” had announced its discovery at the beginning of 1828, and had sent his son to report on it. The newspaper printed young Mackie’s precious production under the heading of “The Volcano”—it was the most foolish account of the Burning Mountain ever published. And then the Rev. C. P. N. Wilton, Chaplain at Newcastle, and a geologist of real ability, went to see it for himself. In a contribution to “The Sydney

Gazette" of March 10, 1829, Mr. Wilton deals with young Mr. Mackie's observations, and here follows something of what he wrote.

"The only written description of this mountain which, it seems, has hitherto met the public eye, appeared in 'The Australian' newspaper of the 30th of July last, and was copied into 'The Australian Quarterly Journal' in October. . . . Now this description is decidedly incorrect, for in the first place there is no mouth or crater at all, nor does such an opening lie between the peaks of two mountains to which the blacks have given the appellation of Wingen. That portion of the Mountain of Wingen where the fire is now burning, and which is a compact sandstone rock, comprehends parts of two declivities of one and the same mountain. The progress of the fire has of late been down the northern or highest elevation, and is now ascending with great fury the opposite and southern eminence. From the situation of the fire having been in a hollow between two ridges of the same mountain, Mr. Mackie (observer of July 30, 1828) was probably induced to give the clefts in the mountain the appellation 'crater.' The fact is, the rock, as the subterranean fire increases, is rent into several concave chasms of various widths. . . . The area over which the fire is now raging is about half an acre in extent. There were throughout it several chasms, varying in width, from which are constantly emitted sulphurous columns of smoke, the margins of these beautiful with efflorescent crystals of sulphur, varying in colour from the deepest red orange, occasioned by ferruginous mixture, to the palest straw colour where alum predominated. The surface of the ground near

these shafts was too hot to permit me to stand any length of time upon it, neither were the vapours arising from them by any means the most grateful to the lungs. . . . No lava or trachyte of any description was to be met with, nor did I see any appearance of coal."

However, whether Mr. Wilton saw any indications of coal or not—and it is quite easy to miss them on the summit of the hill—the fact has long been established that the Burning Mountain is nothing else but the combustion of coal seams that extend to a very great depth.

As has been mentioned in the preceding chapter, Mount Wingen was again visited in December, 1831, by an observer whose notes are of value. Major Mitchell's description of the Burning Mountain tallies generally with Mr. Wilton's, but the main value of his observations lies in the fact that he made a plan survey, and a sketch in elevation, of the ranges in which it is situated on the eastern side of the Kingdon Ponds Valley. So we are enabled to fix the exact position of the fire when Mount Wingen was first investigated by white men.

"Since 1831 Mount Wingen has been very carefully examined by many eminent geologists, including the Rev. W. B. Clarke and Professor David, and it has been established beyond the possibility of doubt that the cause of the fire is the combustion of a very thick seam of coal which lies up against the basaltic mountains of volcanic origin, situated to the eastward of the Burning Mountain Range, and which form the divide between the Valley of Kingdon Ponds and Page's River. The coal measures of the Kingdon Ponds Valley, apparently without much local disturbance, have all



“Karuah”

been tilted by the same action as that which tilted the Greta seam (now burning). This displacement varies in places from 55 to 80 degrees from the horizontal; but on the western side of the valley the coal measures are almost level, and are capped by a range which Professor David considered to be composed of Hawkesbury sandstone. The exact point at which the tilted seams end and the local seams begin has not been determined, as it is covered by the deep alluvium of the valley."

The last quotation is from "Mount Wingen and the Wingen Coal Measures," by W. E. Abbott, whose observations of it extended over a long lifetime, and may be regarded, as has been stated, as the most authoritative of any yet made. The book was written at the request of his friend, H. L. White, of Belltrees, who had twenty-five copies printed for private circulation. To those who wish for a fuller and more competent account of Mount Wingen than is possible here, a copy is available in the Mitchell Library at Sydney.

Mr. Abbott remembered it from the year 1852—a period of 72 years—and lived close beside it all his life. A deep knowledge of geology and mineralogy enabled him to speak with authority on all that concerns Mount Wingen and the country in which it is situated. In his book he goes very extensively into the geological aspect of the Burning Mountain, but beyond the above quotation and those which follow, there is not space here for any detail.

"During the last 65 years," he wrote in 1917, "the fire of Mount Wingen has climbed almost to the top of the southern slope of the hollow in which it was situated when discovered in 1828, and as it moved south

all signs of fire have disappeared from the northern slope and the hollow, and from about half-way up the southern slope. I cannot say whether this southward movement has been regular or not. When I first saw it, twenty odd years after Mr. Wilton and Sir Thomas Mitchell described it, my recollection is very distinct that it was just as they describe it.

"Now their descriptions would not apply, as all signs of fire have disappeared from the whole area of combustion. For the last 65 years there has been a gradual dying down as the fire moved south—an appearance of going out. During the whole time the fire was moving up the southern slope of the hollow the rock to the west of the line of fire kept cracking into long fissures, nearly parallel to the line of fire, and sinking down in steps, and some similar cracks at right angles or across the line on which the fire was advancing were always forming in front of the fire just as they are now.

"This was caused by the burning out of the underlying Greta coal seams, and, as the subsidence in places is more than 20 feet, it proves that the burning seam at Wingen is very thick. . . . I believe that this seam is in places 30 feet thick.

"In making a geological examination of the Wingen district, which I did many years ago with the assistance and under the instruction of the late Rev. W. B. Clarke, then a very old man and unable to climb about the mountains, I found, showing in the recently-built railway line, a well-defined basaltic or dioritic dyke over 30 feet wide, running in the direction of the Burning Mountain. If this dyke connects with the basaltic formation east of the Burning Mountain—as it very probably does—it would cut all the coal seams, and

this may account for the gradual dying down of the fire in the last 65 years."

The writer can remember the Burning Mountain for as long, almost, as he can remember anything—that is to say, for about 60 years. Since W. E. Abbott first saw it in 1852 it has only progressed about 80 yards. In the writer's recollection it has moved, roughly, about half that distance. Of late years, however—that is, during the last three decades—it has unmistakably begun to change its direction of advance, and is now taking rather a westerly than a southern course.

The distance over which the fire can be traced as having moved—between the most northerly point on the burnt-out track over which it has travelled and its present position—is about a mile and three-quarters, or 3,080 yards. A very pretty and entertaining little sum in the rule of three now presents itself. If the fire burns 80 yards in 68 years, it would, assuming its rate of progress to have been constant, have been burning for some 2,518 years. But two considerations discount this estimate of the age of the Burning Mountain as such. The rate of progress may not have been constant—although it has been consistently so for over a century—and it may have started, say, in the middle of the present burnt-out area, and have worked both ways. But however you look at it, the very lowest estimate of the duration of the fire cannot reasonably have been less than 1,500 years, and there are many good grounds for supposing that it has been going on for even a much greater length of time than that.

"Neither Mr. Wilton nor Sir Thomas Mitchell," writes W. E. Abbott, "seems to have made any attempt

to determine the extent of the burnt-out country north of the fire, when they made their observations. If they had, they would have found what is called the Little Burning Mountain, about a mile and three-quarters from the main fire, in a direction a little east of north . . . on the estate of Bickham, the property of Mr. H. A. Wright. The country between the two fires is completely overgrown with heavy timber, which shows no sign of a fire ever having passed through it, but the line can easily be traced by the fissured rocks and evidences of subsidence like that which has taken place along the western side of the fire at Mount Wingen. The Little Burning Mountain has not changed its position since I first saw it many years ago, nor altered its appearance in any way. The only indication of fire is the rising of sulphurous smoke and steam from a few cracks or holes in the ground, over a surface of a few yards, where the surface is comparatively level. Probably the fire has become stationary and is dying out, because the coal seams are more nearly horizontal, in which case the falling in of the roof would cut off ventilation."

When the writer last visited the Little Burning Mountain, about 22 years ago, it was just the same length of time since he had previously seen it. Its position was in no way changed, but, so far as his memory served him, the vents had altered somewhat. There was a fissure in the slope of a ridge running westward from the dividing range of the Page River and Kingdon Ponds watersheds, which was a good 25 feet wide and about 15 feet high at its mouth. It was possible to see far down into the great crack. No vapour was rising from it—though it was said to steam

in wet weather—but an intense heat and sulphurous gases eddied up from the bowels of the earth, so that it was not possible to go down into it for more than a yard or two. The fires far below were undoubtedly burning with a certain fierceness, though, as W. E. Abbott pointed out in his book, they were probably declining in intensity.

We walked over the rough country that lies between the two fires and saw the great timber growing where, many centuries ago, the surface of the earth was as hot under foot as it is now on the burning part of Mount Wingen. It is mostly ironbark and red-gum, and some of the trees are undoubtedly very old. As is well known, the *eucalypti* attain great age, and some of these veterans are growing in the earth-filled position of fissures whose process of filling in must have taken a length of time that could only be reckoned in hundreds of years. It is possible—from all the evidence—to hazard a supposition that the Burning Mountain may antedate the Christian era by some centuries.

Whenever the fire began, there can be little doubt that it started at some period before the birth of Christ, and that for at least 2,000 years it has been slowly eating out the coal seams deep down below the surface of the earth. It is no new thing. The blackfellows had no tradition of its origin—indeed, they preferred neither to mention nor discuss it, and did not like to go near it. Whether it had its beginnings geologically, or whether it commenced as the result of an ordinary bush fire, we shall never know, for there is no way of determining the question. It is one of those deep mysteries of this ancient and mysterious continent of ours which is unfathomable—as unfathomable as the origin of the bunyip tradition.

Chapter XXVI

THE NEWCASTLE PACKETS

THE village of Wingen lies five miles below the source of the Kingdon Ponds, and its height above sea level is about 1000 feet. Overhanging it is the great blue dome of Mount Murulla—always referred to locally as “The Murlow”—and the scenery everywhere in the neighbourhood is very beautiful and grand. The higher ranges, as has been mentioned before, are basaltic, and they are fringed about their bases by the remains of an ancient sedimentary deposit of sandstone and conglomerate belonging to the Hawkesbury series, waterworn and broken into craggy ravines and cliffs that lend colour and variety to the view from the middle of the narrowing valley. From a point just below Wingen, the end of a long tongue of rough mountain country, projecting southward like a cape or promontory, has the semblance of a giant seated female figure, and has long been famous in the district as “The Stone Woman of Wingen.”

In recent years the old North Road has been diverted eastward of the track it used to take over the crest of Warland's Range, and now ascends the divide between the Kingdon Ponds watershed and that of the Page River by a much easier gradient than the pioneers first

used and is familiar to those who, like the writer, have known this country all their lives. After a steep ascent from the head of the valley, a long and gentle slope carried the road down to the village of Blandford, in the valley of the Page, four miles from the old-time town of Murrurundi—the new highway rejoins the older one close to Blandford—and about half-a-mile beyond the summit, on the left-hand side of the road as you go north, stands a sandstone obelisk which marks the scene of a bushranging tragedy of four-score years ago. The inscription on one of its faces tells the story—

To the memory of

Mr. PETER CLARK,

who was shot by Wilson, the bushranger,
near this spot on the 9th of April, 1863.

This monument was erected by public subscription in honour of the brave deceased, who lost his life while endeavouring to effect the capture of that notorious offender.

Wilson shot Clark through the heart whilst the latter was grappling with him, and was himself then rushed and disarmed by Clark's two companions. The highwayman was subsequently tried at Maitland, and hanged in East Maitland Gaol later in the year. Now the monument stands, unnoticed and forgotten, in one of the paddocks belonging to the Bickham estate, but to some of us who are growing old it was formerly the most important historical landmark of those parts. Riding over Warland's Range at night not a few contemporaries of this recorder of the tragedy—and possibly the recorder himself—have spurred their

horses into a gallop past the site of the obelisk, so that they would not be compelled fearfully to witness a ghostly reproduction of the bloody drama. Whether anyone ever did claim to have seen Peter Clark's ghost is not clearly recollected by the writer, but when he was a lad that bit of the Great Northern Road was always supposed to be haunted.

Murrurundi is possibly the most picturesquely situated town in the whole of the Hunter River district. High mountains wall in the valley of the Page on either side, and the fertile flats along the river are rich and green with beautiful farms and gardens. Somewhere about three miles westward of the town the highway crosses the Liverpool Range—which the railway pierces by means of a long tunnel—after a winding climb up the flanks of the mountain. The actual divide is very narrow, and it used to be said that a man might stand upon the summit and spit into the Murray River to the westward and into the Tasman Sea to the east—figuratively, of course. From this elevated position, looking back down the valley, one of the most beautiful views is obtainable that it is possible to enjoy anywhere. Immediately below, on the western side, lies Doughboy Hollow, where Edward Denny Day, with his armed commando, fought and captured the Jewboy gang of bushrangers in 1840, as related in a previous chapter.

And here we come to the end of our pilgrimage up the Hunter. This locality, of course, is rather the head of a tributary stream than the proper top of the valley, which lies above Belltrees in the Barrington Tops—but it is the place where the valley's furthest outpost was established over a century ago. For many years Murrurundi was the gateway through which all traffic

and trade to the north and north-west of New South Wales had to pass—just as it had to pass through Morpeth, where the Newcastle Packets set it on the road or carried it to sea on the first and last stages of its long journey between the Liverpool Plains and the capital, and *vice versa*. There still remains about the town an old-time aspect of the same sort that lingers in Morpeth and East Maitland. Once upon a time it was a lively little community, brisk with trade and always thronged with travellers along the main highway to the north. But the construction of the railway in the eighteen-seventies left it somewhat high and dry, and to-day, although the centre of a district of considerable pastoral importance, it is as it looks—a place with a past.

And now, to bring this little book to a conclusion, we will go back to the old Coal River settlement at the mouth of the valley and take a glance at the Newcastle Packets as they navigate to and from the Hunter in this year of grace. But before we do that, we will consider the wharf where they berth themselves in the city of to-day.

When you arrive in Port Hunter in the early morning by one of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company's steamers, and, having partaken of coffee and toast in your cabin, are about to go down the gangway on to the landing place, you may or may not be aware that you are about to step ashore on to the King's Wharf. That is the official address of the Company's headquarters in Newcastle, and it is a very old address—almost as old as the city itself—for the first wharf that bore the name was the one that ranked as the

property of His Majesty, King George the Third.

There has been a King's Wharf in Port Hunter from the very earliest days of British settlement there, and probably always will be. Roughly speaking, it is nowadays that stretch of quayside lying between a point opposite to the Custom House and the landing-place to the westward of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company's sheds where the passenger ferry to Stockton, over on the north side of the harbour, takes its departure—but the first wharf ever constructed on the Hunter was a wooden jetty sticking out into the estuary, at right angles to the shore, somewhere about the eastern end of that length of riverside. There, in the very early days, was the official landing-place for all the people and goods that came to and went from Newcastle.

It is shown in a picture that illustrates one of the early volumes of "The Historical Records of New South Wales," wherein Nobby's is an island, and the wharf itself is depicted as a flimsy structure, only capable of accommodating the smallest of ocean-going vessels. It was strictly guarded by a red-coated sentry, and every person making use of it was required to give a full account of himself and his business, and to produce his authority for doing so. Its position is more or less determined by the following paragraph in the "Instructions to the Commandant at the Coal River," issued by Governor Macquarie in 1810. Thus it reads:

"Some lives having been lost by persons bathing on that part of the beach where there is a heavy surf, you are to caution all persons against bathing in any other place than on the beach within the harbour, to the westward of the wharf."

It is on to the position of that beach that you step ashore to-day when landing from the steamer that has carried you from Sydney.

Three paragraphs from Macquarie's "Instructions to the Commandant" emphasise the importance of the first King's Wharf, and are worth quoting. They are given as they are numbered in the original document.

"31. It being equally necessary for the security of the colony, and of all vessels lying in the Coal River, that the masters and sailors belonging to them should sleep on board, you are to direct all masters and sailors to go on board their respective vessels before eight o'clock at night in the winter season, and before 9 o'clock in the summer months. Sailors, for a first offence, are to be confined for the night and sent on board next day, and not to be permitted on that occasion to land again; for a second offence they are to receive 25 lashes, and to be put to Government work until the Governor's pleasure shall be made known to you; and masters of vessels acting in disobedience of this order are to be confined for the night, and you are to report their conduct to the Governor.

"32. You are strictly to forbid all persons from harbouring or permitting any master of a vessel or sailor to remain in their houses, huts or lodgings after bell ringing at 8 o'clock in the evenings in winter, and 9 o'clock in the summer, contrary to the foregoing article; and a breach of this injunction is to be punished by a forfeiture to Government of all houses or huts wherein they have been so harboured. The persons so harbouring them are also to receive moderate corporal punishment.

"33. You are to authorise the sentinel at the wharf

to detain any master of a vessel or sailors who shall be found transgressing the 31st article of these instructions."

If you look at the amount of cargo, inward and outward, that rests temporarily on the King's Wharf to-day, you will be able to form some idea of the enormous value of the commodities that have been received into and despatched from the Port of Newcastle during the century and more since the King's Wharf of George III came into existence. Pretty well every conceivable article of commerce is dumped daily upon the stout decking of the wharf, from household furniture to mining machinery, from haberdashery to caterpillar tractors, from lucerne-hay to sewing machines. Marshal Blucher's remark when he first looked out over London might well be paraphrased by anyone observing a day's activities on this busy quay-side into, "Oh, what a wharf to loot!"

The present ships of the Newcastle and Hunter River Company—the Newcastle Packets of to-day—are the "Mulubinba," the "Karuah" and the "Kindur," the two first provided with limited passenger accommodation, and the last having been designed and built solely for the cargo trade.

The "Mulubinba" was built at Leith, in Scotland, by Henry Robb, Ltd., in 1937. She is 220 feet in length, with a beam of 39 feet, and a depth of sixteen. Her deadweight capacity is 1518 tons, with a gross tonnage of 1262 and net 479. Her speed is $11\frac{1}{4}$ knots.

The "Karuah" was built at Hong Kong by the Hong Kong and Whampoa Dockyard Co., Ltd., in 1940. She is 230 feet long, has a beam of 39 feet, and a depth of seventeen. She has a deadweight capacity of 1570

tons, with a gross tonnage of 1341 and net 514. Her speed is $12\frac{1}{2}$ knots. She was the first vessel built abroad for the Australian trade of Australian steel, the latter having been forged in the Broken Hill Proprietary Company's works at Newcastle and shipped to the East. She was also the first steamer to use Australian-made wire ropes on board, and the fittings of her cabin accommodation are of Australian timbers.

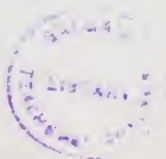
Both vessels are equipped with water-tube boilers fired by mechanical stokers, and are the first and so far the only vessels of the Australian merchant service to employ this means of firing their boilers. They each have accommodation for 12 passengers in deck cabins.

The cargo-carrier "Kindur" is a steamer of 1267 tons gross, and for the last fifteen years has done constant and efficient work in the Sydney-Newcastle trade. There is a circumstance in connection with her name that is historically interesting—she is called after a river that doesn't exist.

Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, left Sydney in November, 1831, in search of a river which a runaway and recaptured convict named Clarke—otherwise "George the Barber"—asserted to flow to the sea in a westerly direction from the Liverpool Plains. As a result of his journey, Major Mitchell came to the conclusion that this stream was wholly a myth and Mr. Clarke an unmitigated liar. He did not even think that it was represented by the Namoi, the Gwydir or the Macintyre Rivers. So it would seem that this vessel is named after a geographical feature that is not, and never was, in the realm of reality. However, that doesn't alter the fact that the "Kindur" is a very fine ship.

With this brief mention of the present-day Newcastle Packets we will bring their long story, and the story of the Valley they have so well served for more than a hundred years, to an end—very conscious that so superficial an outline of the history of both is somewhat inadequate. The ships running in the trade between Sydney and Newcastle have helped to develop and serve one of the richest provinces in the Australian Commonwealth, and one with a story that might have been more fully told. However, as has been remarked at its beginning, the author of this book is a Hunter River native, and although he doesn't actually hate other people who were not born on the banks of the old river, and only feels sorry for them, he hopes that his prejudices in its favour may not have led him to exaggerate its excellences as a countryside that counts for much in the story of Australia. He can only hope that the reader may have an opportunity of seeing the Hunter Valley for himself or herself, and may have the good sense to navigate to the mouth of the river by one of the Newcastle Packets.

THE END.



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